DENT

V435.33

## LENDING DEPARTMENT

Tel. : Bishopsgate 3311

Open Monday to Friday from **10** a.m. to **8.0** p.m.
Saturdays **10** a.m. to **6** p.m.

**Loss and Damage to Books**—Lost books and any damage done to books will be charged for. Borrowers are requested to examine books on receiving them, and call attention to any faults.

Borrowers are specially cautioned against writing in or turning down the leaves of books, or allowing them to get wet in carrying them to and from the Libraries. Books should be kept out of the reach of animals.

The L[illegible]rian is empowered to refuse books to messenge[illegible] from he may consider unfit to take proper care of t[illegible]. Borrowers should, as far as possible, attend [illegible]ally to exchange their books.

**Time allo[illegible]or Reading** is **14** days, including Sundays and exclud[illegible] day of issue. Books taken out on any day of the [illegible]e returnable on or before the **same day** in the sec[illegible] afterwards, and must be returned to the Libra[illegible] which they have been borrowed. Borrowers [illegible]lend their books.

**Renewa[illegible]** [illegible]ook can be renewed for a further [illegible]riod of [illegible]ovided it is not required by another [illegible]ower [illegible]g personally or by messenger, tele[illegible]he number of the book and the date [illegible]y from which it was borrowed. No [illegible]d more than once, except at the [illegible]rian, and not at all if a fine is owing.

[illegible]ll be fined **one penny** for each week [illegible]during which a book is detained [illegible]d for reading. No books will be [illegible] fines.

[illegible]Borrowers are entitled to three [illegible]cket (on which **any** book may be [illegible]Tickets available for all books [illegible]Borrowers' Tickets are available [illegible]respective of the Department [illegible]ued.

**[illegible]f Lo[illegible] Tickets**—Borrowers must [illegible]ny [illegible]ge of address or loss of [illegible]Borough must return their

**[illegible]ks must not be taken into [illegible] case of infectious disease. [illegible]d to infection must not be [illegible]t be handed to the Public [illegible].**

[illegible]ommittee,

[illegible]. JACKSON, F.L.A.,
Borough Librarian.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
LIBRARY SERVICE

Author

Title

BOOK STORE

Books or discs must be returned on or before the last date stamped on label or on card in book pocket. Books or discs can be renewed by telephone, letter or personal call unless required by another reader. After library hours use the Ansafone Service (01-698 7347). For hours of opening and charges see notices at the above branch, but note that all lending departments close at 1 pm on Wednesday and all libraries are closed on Sundays, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Bank Holidays and Saturdays prior to Bank Holidays.

METROPOLITAN
SPECIAL COLLECTION

# FOUR BOON FELLOWS

*A YORKSHIRE TRAMPING ODYSSEY*

796.148

# FOUR BOON FELLOWS

*A YORKSHIRE TRAMPING ODYSSEY*

BY ALFRED J. BROWN

TRANSFERRED TO
Metropolitan Special Collections
LEWISHAM.

LONDON AND TORONTO
J. M. DENT AND SONS LTD.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE TEMPLE PRESS, LETCHWORTH, HERTS

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1928
FIRST CHEAP EDITION, 1930

T42-74

13143 C

WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

TO A CERTAIN FOREIGN MISSIONER

SOMEWHERE IN THE BUSH

AND TO ALL BOON FELLOWS WHO HAVE NOT

YET LOST THE USE OF THEIR LEGS

THIS BOOK IS HEARTILY DEDICATED

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/fourboonfellowsy0000unse

## AN INVITATION TO THE CRITICS TO SLAY THIS BOOK

Here is a Book——if you can call it a Book. . . . And if not, who am I to blame you?

Here, at least, is a Pedestrian Piece of Writing glorifying the Legs at the expense of the Wheel.

In short, a thoroughly pernicious, rambling, decadent work of the Pen.

Here it is at the cross-roads—under your very noses.

And the HOGS are abroad!

Touching the Adventures of

Those Four Fine Bullyrocks

Hereinafter referred to as

WHARFE, AIRE, OUSE AND SWALE

In their Heroic Fight against

The Massed Might of

THE HOGS

And of how they made their way

On Two Legs

From Barney Castle on the Tees

Over Arkengarthdale

Swaledale

Wensleydale

Langstrothdale

And Wharfedale

Into the Heart of their Incomparable Shire

# CONTENTS


PAGE

Book I. APOLOGY FOR THIS BOOK . . . . 1

Book II. THE ROAD . . . . . 57

Book III. EASTER DAY . . . . . 153

Book IV. EASTER MONDAY . . . . . 257

APPENDICES—

The Old Road . . . . . 311

The Old Shire . . . . . 313

The Old Hog . . . . . 315

The Olden Ale . . . . . 318

Of the Yorkshire Witches . . . . . 320

Bibliography . . . . . 321

## THE ARGUMENT(S)

For, like all Heroic Things, the Argument is Two-Leggèd:

| I | II |
|---|---|
| First: The Path | First the Garden of Eden |
| Then: The Track | Inhabited by Adam and |
| Then: The Road | Eve |
| Made by Man on Two Legs | |
| For the use of Men on Two Legs. | Then: Yorkshire |
| | Inhabited by York- |
| | shiremen. |
| Then: The Companion Quadrupeds: | Then the Jealous Invaders: |
| The Horse | The Devil |
| The Cow | The Romans |
| The Sheep | The Picts |
| The Pig | The Scots |
| The Dog | The Garmuns |
| The Cat | The Danes |
| And the Domestic Fowl. | The Pirates |
| | The Normans |
| Then: The Jolly Coach-and-Six | The Mormons |
| bowling along in friendly | The Historians |
| comradeship | The Missing Links |
| The Boneshaker | The Tourists |
| The Bicycle | The Ten Lost Tribes |

And They Died

Leaving

THE YORKSHIREMEN

In Unchallenged Possession of Their Own

Then

(Last of All)

That Usurper, Interloper and Abomination of Desolation

THE HOG

With All his Works and Pumps

Plundering, Despoiling, Ravaging, Polluting,

Maiming, Murdering, Decimating and Knocking-Down

Leaving THE FOUR LADS

Whose noble stride is herein recorded.

. . . Lusty Lads and Large of length
Which dwelt at Seimerwater side. . . .

*Ballad of Flodden Field.*

I hackèd him in pieces sma'.

*Old Ballad.*

The Coroner, while expressing his sympathy with the relatives of the deceased, exonerated the Hacker from all blame.

*Any Coroner.*
*Any Deceased.*
*Any Daily Newspaper.*

*Old Rhyme chanted by the host in the Pilgrimage of Grace*

Forthe shall come a worme, an Aske with one eye,
He shall be the chief of the mainye;
He shall gather of Chivalrie a fulle faire flocke
Half capon and half cocke,
The chicken shall the capon slay
And after thathe shall be no May.

*Merlin.*

## THE FOUR RIVERS

*And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads.*

*The name of the one is Phison: that is it which compasseth all the land of Hevilath, where gold groweth.*

*And the gold of that land is very good; there is found bdellium and the onyx stone.*

*And the name of the second river is Gehon; the same is it that compasseth all the land of Ethiopia.*

*And the name of the third river is Tigris; the same passeth along by the Assyrians.*

*And the fourth river is Euphrates.*

*And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it. . . .*

*Genesis.*

# BOOK I

## APOLOGY FOR THIS BOOK

My Dear Pater,

And why should I not write this book? Why should I not—however unworthily—sing the praises of our County, that we have so often tramped together?

I will tell you why: you who are so gloriously exiled in the bush: you, so happily walking day by day beyond reach of the screaming of the Horn and the roaring of the Engine: you, still so entirely dependent on the legs God gave you. It is because this little land of ours is beset by a hideous invader: a ubiquitous Thing on Wheels of multiple forms, but of one devouring purpose, which is to eat up our very roads, to tear up our very byways, to massacre our few remaining Shanks's Mares, to choke the last Guard of the old legion of Walkers, to throw dust in their eyes, to set traps for their legs, and, in a word, to knock them down and exterminate them utterly.

I doubt there will be no room for this book, or if room, no sale should it ever appear; for who will be left to read it but the very Enemy it assails? How they will laugh at it —if it be ever displayed (as a curious relic of the Pedestrian Ages) between the piled ranks of Lubricating Literature which, in these unhappy days, lords it over our bookstalls!

For you, who still lift up your heart in gratitude and pride when you have footed it all day in the bush, cannot understand what a small thing a mere hundred miles is: or what a presumptuous piece of swagger it is actually to give such a journey the dignity of printed words!



SHOREDITCH * PUBLIC *

It is many years now since you and I laughed our way past Giggleswick (Gotwot) to the hills, and you cannot conceive what a contemptible piece of mile-eating that was! You, who even still foolishly dream of the night we entered the Angel Inn at Hetton, dust-sanctified, after our forty-miles march, cannot understand what fools we were to talk of that as of a memorable pilgrimage. But if ever you *are* inclined to think of it with a suspicion of exultation again, remember rather the humble eccentricity of that strange bird of yours which (so I am told by the best authorities) buries its head in the sand to cover its blushes.

For let me tell you, as an antidote to vainglory, that there are—not occasional Solitaries—but thousands upon thousands of Things on Wheels which every mortal day of the year do infinitely better than *that*!

And not singly do they go, nor abreast as the legions of old; nor as the pure and undefiled, but *one behind the other*, like slinking devils on a chain. Forty miles? My dear fellow, it is a mere half-hour's meal; and at Brooklands they can eat twice as much in the time.

PATER. Yes, but how and who——?

(I hear you exclaim: And whenever I *do* hear you, I am going to stick you in the margin *like this*, and call you by the name that is peculiarly your own. You are to be, as it were, the spiritual presence, the Father Confessor and the Fourth Dimension in this incredible story. And you are going to come in extremely useful, especially when these lusty Lads come to blows. So)

I will admit at once that these Things on Wheels are still slightly dependent on the Human Element: that is, a pair of very oily hands, and a pair of strained, woebegone eyes: but not, I am happy to think, of feet. Feet are quite superfluous. Quite. A licence and a speedometer—yes: but not feet: most certainly not feet.

In the early days of the invasion, a curious little cory-

bantic dance had to be performed (with the feet) before The Thing started on its course and opened its jaws to lick up the paltry miles ahead. But now no such Grace before Meat is needed: the Things are so-called Self-Starters: that is, they chew up the road without a moment's fuss, and so long as they are copiously provided with juice to prevent lockjaw, they will go on meekly golloping miles for the rest of the day—or the year, as required.

The strange and rather frightful-looking Hoggets who pilot them, in oilskins and goggles, are consequently rapidly assuming club-feet which (of course) quite obviates that hole-in-the-sock nonsense that used to worry you so much. I heard a Hogget boasting the other day that he had not had to buy a new pair of socks for six months. And I can well believe him. God rest his soles!

There is, however, another Type or Species of these Things on Wheels. The Hoggets I have already so pithily described, scorch on only Two Wheels; the Hog major affects Four Wheels or even Six Wheels. And here, curiously enough, an occasional dig or kick with the foot *is* still necessary (so I am told) to keep the Thing under proper control, else it would devour the road rather faster than is permitted by the Licensing Authorities (though not, of course, a mile too fast for the Hogs inside). This kick (or dig) is naturally a great nuisance, especially to the club-footed, but the time is not (I am assured) far distant when the need therefor will quite disappear so that the Four-Wheeled Things also will require simply a pair of oily hands (for oil is of the very essence of the Things), a pair of woebegone and—preferably—begoggled eyes and (of course) a Roaring Horn to tear, chew and gollop as many miles as are left between Land's End and John o' Groats.

Meantime, the wealthier Hogs (rightly resenting the tyranny of the occasional kick (or dig) with the foot) employ a statuesque slave who sits like a Dumb God at the maw

of the Thing and kicks, digs and hoots all day and (especially) all night as the occasion requires. This is, of course, a great advantage, since it enables the Hogs to keep a better check on the miles eaten and the Mares massacred on the way. And that is their only end.

You can imagine then, my dear Pater, what a pother there is on the roads to-day in this absurdly little land of ours; you can imagine, I say (but thank God, you cannot see, smell, feel or hear), the rushing and the roaring, the stinking and the shrieking, the grinding and the crunching, the banging and the basting that scarify those noble roads that you so loved. And being a man of some spirit—albeit long-suffering and of an enormous charity—you will understand me when I say, they make me scream out with a furious but ineffectual rage.

Of course, there are Regulations. At the great cross-roads heroic men stand—who still retain (though in a pitifully restricted form) the use of *their* legs—men whose duty it is to take out greasy little notebooks every now and then to record a Hog's number that they cannot see, blinded as they are by that same Hog's barrage of mud and dust; men, too, who have been known to stand in the very Middle of the Road (O Appian Way!) only to retreat hastily to the gutter when they found their signal of Arrest disregarded.

On the walls, moreover, of the country barns and byres, you will find plastered an occasional:

ORDER FOR REGULATING THE MOVEMENTS OF SWINE

(Swine being the generic name for these Things on Wheels), to which nobody (least of all the swine themselves, who travel too fast even to see them) pays any attention.

At night, most of all, are they to be feared, for it is then that their terrible eyes bulge from their sockets like the eyes of no other monster ever met with in fable. Sometimes they

are green, sometimes yellow, sometimes white and phosphorescent, but always enormous and horrible so that to look at them is to be blinded on the spot and bowled over without further ceremony. And not satisfied with two eyes like any other beast in nature, the Hog carries four such saucer-eyes in front and (astonishing as this may seem) one more of a fiery-red clapped on his behind.

Occasionally, it is true, you will meet a One-eyed Hogget projecting only one dazzling ray from the middle of his horns, but before you have grown used to the marvel and advanced to slay him, a four-eyed Monster looms out of the night and paralyses you with his piercing beams.

. . . . . .

But I digress.

And indeed I make no apology for that; for I am become so accustomed to digressing from the straight roads of old and nosing down every discoverable byway that I cannot be expected to keep to the main prose road as I was taught to do in my pure and indivagating nonage. Let me warn you, therefore, at the outset that this honest story of an hundred miles' walk——

Hog. What? you would fill a whole book with a measly hundred miles? Why only last Saturday I did two hundred and forty-five without a thought——

Scribe. I can quite believe you, for I think I smelt you at Barnard Castle.

Hog. And I will prove by my Speedometer that my old bus has registered four thousand five hundred and eighty-nine since——

Scribe. No you won't, whoever you are: I will not be contaminated by the likes of you, and as for your Speedometer, there will be time enough to examine *that* when you drive into Hades and have your licence endorsed for the last time and suspended for all eternity.

. . . . . .

Let me warn you, I say, my dear Pater, that this honest story of an hundred miles' walk over moor and fell and mountain and river—

(Yes, over rivers, as you shall very soon hear) will be as full of digressions as that noble stride itself.

For the way of the Walker to-day is strewn with pitfalls and perils and the Open Road (may those who have defiled it rot and burn) is only to be followed in a sneaking, furtive kind of way, else, he who assays it will very quickly find himself pitched head over heels into the ditch, his legs broken and his boots raped from his feet.

For Adventure is returned again, but it is not with dragons nor hippogriffs nor griffins nor knights-errant nor swashbucklers nor shrewd blades nor highwaymen bold nor honest rapscallions, but it is—as I have said before—with Things on Wheels having Venomous Engines and snorting Horns—more poisonous than dragons and more cunning than any steel. There was a certain glory in being cleaved to the chine by a roisterer; but what more inglorious death can you imagine than to be hacked to pieces by a Thing on Wheels? A man could stand up to a sword and give blow for blow; he could hoodwink a dragon, and win everlasting fame; but even a brave man with stout legs under him cannot stand up against a Screaming Hog that advances like the lightning and as swiftly knocks him down.

The Last of the Vikings is long ago a legend, and it may well be ere long that the Last of the Walkers will share his dim renown. But before that fell day dawns, I will set down the story of the Easter pilgrimage of Wharfe, Ouse, Aire and Swale. I will relate how in spite of all perils they accomplished their noble resolve: I will tell how they circumvented the Hogs for the space of three whole days and nights: I will trace their splendid track from beginning to end: I will most faithfully record their adventures, their rencontres; their conversations; their songs and silences; their fasts

and carouses; their brawls and barneys and (above all) their modest eulogies of the Shire. And for the benefit of the curious antiquarians of posterity, I will make bold to describe their appearance and their feet, not omitting their corns and calluses, their blisters and abrasions and—in short—everything appertaining to such noble Fellows. Furthermore, I will most certainly include an account of some of the great Walkers who have gone before; of the lost Fellowship of the Road which they endeavoured so manfully and so vainly to revive: and of the rebuffs they met with in the attempt. I will paint, too, a true picture of the Inns which they visited and of the Hotels which they fled. But, above all, I will mention only such places as I have visited on foot.

All these things will I set down truthfully as becomes a Scribe whose theme is of the very Salt of the Earth.

So help me God.

. . . . .

I

Enough then of preamble, and let us (by all means) to the Theme.

O happy theme! When I think of it——

Hog. You are too fond of thinking. Have at it! or I shall most certainly truncate you at the cross-roads!

Scribe. And what do you know of cross-roads: O miserable bugwort! (Shame on me for slandering an innocent blossom!) What do you know of cross-roads and of the guardian Finger-posts, that used to keep watch over them before you hacked them down and erected your ghastly numbered idols in their stead? Have you ever even climbed a signpost in the dark? . . . But I forget you have lost the use of your legs.

. . . . .

O happy theme! When I think of it my hand trembles

with anticipatory frenzy; my heart bounces with remembered delights; my feet paw the ground and urge me to leave the book on the desk unwritten, and change my pen for a staff, and tread the track again.

Then I remember you, my Companion of old; then I remember my high purpose and my sworn resolve, and like a tormented lover I turn my eyes from my lady's face to gather flowers for her adorning. They will not, alas, be worthy of her; for by the uprooting they will have lost their morning freshness and the sanctuary of their fields.

. . . . .

Hog. Tut tut, what is all this talk of flowers? I remember once stopping at Stratford-on-Avon to gather a bunch——

Scribe. Spoliator!

Hog. . . . of old English blossoms.

Scribe. How now, old Blossom?

Hog. And they were all dead and nasty by the time I reached Edinburgh. I remember I stopped for a refill at Birmingham and had a puncture at Pudsey——

Scribe. May your tyres blister and blow up! May the Road be paved with punctures and may all the Petroleum wells in the world dry up or burst to blazes! *You* gather blossoms! You with your oily paws and snuffy nose: you who desecrate a thousand roses a day with your poisonous spume. How dare you gather blossoms!

Hog. But I did sixty-three at Slough.

Scribe. Roses?

Hog. No, miles, you fool.

Scribe. Then you deserve burning in your own petrol.

. . . . .

You see, my Pater, how difficult it is to keep to my road, but for every Hog butting into my text, be assured there were

an hundred and forty barging into my behind; though I will let you down much more lightly than they did me.

And it is high time I began.

. . . . .

II

But hold.

It is not so simple as that! There is a time for all things, and I am not going to be rushed off my feet. You must give me a reasonable time to fall into my stride, or I shall fall over myself. I have no desire to overtake anything or anybody. I am, I confess proudly—a jogger.

I have not even got into my boots, nor my breeches. Nor has Aire yet been deservedly pinched and screwed by that Leeds Jew. And if I should suddenly say:

"Here Aire blistered, and Ouse oozed," you would—and very rightly—suddenly seize your breviary and flick over the leaves furiously until you came to the day's Office; and refuse to have anything more to do with me.

Know, then, that when I speak thus airily of Aire, I do not mean to stigmatise that pure and pellucid Stream itself. I am speaking simply of the *Lad who was Aire*, and in like manner of the *Lad who was Ouse*, of the *Lad who was Swale* and (begging your pardon) of the *Lad who was Wharfe*.

But all these things I shall explain leisurely and lucidly in the proper time and place; though certainly not in this Chapter.

III

And here, at the outset, I must make my protest against the Fury of this Century. As a counterblast to it, I am going to make my century of miles a real century of real miles. Verily and in truth I am going to measure my miles by inches . . . not telegraph poles. And if any Hog has

been hoodwinked into purchasing this (as yet unborn and hardly-conceived) book, let me advise, nay command, him to put it down. I am not going to have him or any other of the same hectic kidney skipping his way through it in the hope of finding a short cut to Happiness or to Hades either. I am heartily sick of seeing them churning their way through Automobilia. I am bedizzied by seeing them flash about the country-side like the Things Possessed which they are. I am, as our honest-speaking men of the County say, all of a muck-sweat when I go among them in our own cities. I will not be pushed off my Theme as I am pushed off the Road, and (God help me) the causeway. I refuse to be hustled and bustled—and rustled. I have one hundred honest miles of writing to do, and six million three hundred and thirty-six inches of Road to cover before I am finished. . . . And there are no short cuts. When you are tired, therefore, turn down the page and contemplate my own great weariness.

And if you, O Hog! are seized with the desire to sit down and write a better book yourself—full of brisk sentences, truncated words and mangled grammar—then for God's sake, sit down and write it.

For I shall not have written in vain if I make one man in England sit still and shut off his Engine.

IV

But if I should do even more than that: if I should constrain even one Hog to smash his Engine to smithereens and discover the use of his legs again, then, indeed, I think I may yet save my own soul.

V

Yet even so—even with that great and glorious incentive to urge me forward, I confess, pardie, I shrink before the magnitude of this rare labour of love which I have set myself.

I dread to hear the thunder of your disapprobation when you come to read what shall be written. I fear to hear you repeat over the seas the crushing condemnation of that ripe Curate, Sir Nathaniel, who said of poor Dull:

> Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book. He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts. . . .

Even so, I will on, thankful to be sensible if only in the feet. And I will admit at once that I have drunk less ink than ale, eaten less paper than pork, and ploughed my way — clodhopper-like — through more fields than libraries. The moors have been my companions, and the mountains my mentors; and if I have not drunk of the waters of wisdom, at least I have drunk great gulps from our pure springs and rivers.

VI

No, it is not the things you learn about in musty books that daunt me. Nor the most colossal Marvel that brazens it over the county: The Devil's Arrows at Boroughbridge; the grinning rocks at Brimham; the Scar at Hardrow or Gordale or Giggleswick; the Gaping Ghyll at Ingleborogh, or any other eccentricities of Nature—what are these to frighten a man on two legs whose fingers have been dipped in the font? No, it is not these, and not the fearful aspect of Whernside, Penyghent or Ingleborough (shrouded in mist!)——

But why should I divulge that story to the world?

. . . . .

Rather is it the terrible beauty of the dales that holds me back. And—were it not for the firm tread of Wharfe, Ouse, Aire and Swale who preceded your little Scribe on that pilgrimage, I should fly the adventure. But these were

brave Lads and bold, and it behoves me to introduce them to you properly before proceeding an inch farther.

And this I will now do.

VII

Know, then, that there set forth under the leadership of Wharfe on this great Pilgrimage of Grace of an Easter Saturday morning, one man from each of the Three Ridings: North, West and East.

"For," he argued, "if I am to pay due tribute to our fine Shire; if I am to make a last stand on the Road for the rights of Man; if I am to hold my own against the combined forces of the Hogs, then I, too, must join arms—and legs—with a Champion Walker from each Riding."

In the ordinary way, as you know well enough, the Ridings are at friendly loggerheads; the proud West despises the lowly East, and the lordly North looks down on the pair of them. But the moment battle is joined with an invading army, they are as brothers-in-arms; their standard is the white rose; and their battle-shout, Liberty!

Now the North Riding, as you will not fail to remember, contains eleven Wapentakes, and no less than three Liberties; the West, nine Wapentakes, with one Liberty (and that, God knows, as elusive as the Guytrash), while the unfortunate East boasts but six Wapentakes and no Liberties to speak of at all. Howbeit, when Wharfe came to rally his forces, he found a Champion in the North with a pair of legs that certainly looked good for a thousand miles if the need arose; while the rugged West supplied two Champions; one, indeed, spindle-shanked, who walked like a stride-wallops, but of a stout courage; the other (Wharfe himself) strong in the beam and tough-thewed withal; and the East, after a tremendous To-do, sent a fat little fellow full of oaths and swagger and he swore—miles.

The question at once arose what these noble Lads should be called. Obviously men of such fibre and fire could not win Fame with any ordinary Tom-Dick-or-Harry names; and each and all of them refused, point-blank, to be knighted. Knighthood they contended has lost its flower since the Table Round, and they would not belong to a crew that contains such Hogs as Sir Car-Buncle, the Profiteer-in-Ordinary, and Sir Hammer-Toes, the Merchant-Adventurer (Limited), and Sir Splay-Foote, the Keeper of the Archives, and Sir S. I. Atika, the Jam and Pickle man, and Sir Kaye Legges, the Garbage-Comptroller, and Sir Knocke-Knees, the Tyre-Tuner, and Sir Bowe-Legges, the Pork-Dresser, and Sir F. L. Atfoote, the Petrol Thug, and Sir Thingummy-Thimblerigg, the Share-Monger, and Sir John Rottenbottom, the Ship-Owner, and Sir Proude-Paunche, the Oiltaster, and Sir Gross-Spavin, the Holder of the Records.

In short, there was a regular Hullabaloo at the very first Wapentake (which was held in a remote tavern on the high moors), and a great stamping of feet and thwacking of thews, so that I feared internecine strife would destroy them all there and then. But taking advantage of a momentary lull in this bandying of knightly names and doughty deeds, the Champion of the East broke in with these inspiring words:

"Since," he said, "the stream of Chivalry has been so basely polluted, let us take our names from those noble streams of our own County whose sources are still undefiled. And for myself, I will be called by no other name but that of *Ouse*, since that is the noblest of all!"

"Begging your pardon," began the Champion of the North, "and granting that it is worthy offspring of a noble sire——"

Then they fell to barging as to where Ouse really did begin, or whether he began at all or was merely an offshoot and an end.

Whereupon *Ouse* said, his river had neither beginning nor ending, but was one with the eternal things; and therefore without watery peer.

"What?" screamed the Champion of the North, "are not my own Swale and Yore the father and mother who begat him? And would you deny them their own offspring?"

And Aire, not to be outdone, exclaimed:

"Apart from the Little Ouse and a Sussex brat of the same kidney, I have heard some talk, Ouse, of a rival of yours calling himself 'The Great Ouse': a sprawling sulking fellow who crawls wearily into a Wash. . . . Indeed, the whole country is rather overrun with your little Ouses."

"Such insolence!" said Ouse. "It makes me foam at the mouth; it makes me eddy and swirl and fret; it makes me churn, roar, thunder and boil over with rage. Why, all the best geographers allow that I am five miles longer; and quite apart from that——"

"If I might speak," roared one Champion of the West, "I would respectfully urge the claims of Wharfe and of Nidd——"

"And I of Aire," thundered the other.

"The last time I stood on Leeds bridge," roared Wharfe, "I had to hold my nose."

"The next time I see you within a score miles of it, I will hurl you over the parapet," bellowed the Champion of Aire.

"I have heard say, Aire," bellowed Ouse, "that a noisome Canal pads silently along by your side for miles on miles, and that in many places you are as like as two peas—two green peas—so that only a man with a nice sense of smell can distinguish t'other from which."

Then Wharfe, who by his very nature and circumstance was intended by Providence as a go-between, poured oil on their troubled waters, with these words:

"Let us," he said, "agree to waive these foolish claims

until such time as we have accomplished our Pilgrimage. Let us adopt the noble suggestion of Ouse, and assume for the duration of this Pilgrimage, the names of our rivers themselves. For have we not all been, as it were, baptised in those sacred waters? Have we not swum in them, drunk of them, . . . washed in them? What then could be more knightly than this: to walk under those great protective names; to carry them on our scutcheons, and to keep them clean?"

"Agreed!" shouted all.

"I for one," continued Wharfe, "shall be proud to be called *Wharfe*——"

"And I *Ouse*——"

"And I *Swale*——"

"And I *Aire*——"

sang the rest in chorus.

"Now set each of you on this rod your hand,
And shortly follow me,"

said Wharfe, solemnly.

. . . . . .

And in that manner were they christened again as befitted a Pilgrimage of Grace.

But whether they belonged more properly to the Order of Knights Bachelor: Knights Banneret: Knights of the Garter, or Knights of the Shire, I cannot rightly say; certain though I am that they would have no truck with any modern Knights, Barons, Dukes or Earls.

In one sense they belonged to the Knights Bachelor, for that is the oldest Order of Chivalry; but in a special sense, to the Order of the Garter, since they each carried two garters—one on either leg—and set great store by them; so that this Order would seem to have a double claim on them. But for the rest they set forth together as Simple Companions-in-arms.

VIII

PATER. That was as false a christening as I have witnessed.

SCRIBE. Begging your pardon, it was a most holy ceremony!

PATER. You may, my little Scribe, hoodwink your companions, but not so easily me, for there is not a single name in the calendar which I have not bestowed in baptism on some unwitting infant; and I would warn you that had not three of those names already been borne by the noblest knights who ever lived, I would not sanction them at all!

SCRIBE. This is a most wonderful piece of news! For those four Lads hereinafter referred to as WHARFE, OUSE, AIRE and SWALE were proud to think they were the first Knights in the world who had borne these splendid names!

PATER. Then they ought to be heartily ashamed of themselves for not being better acquainted with their own history. And lest they should suffer from overweening pride, let me tell you that (with the lamentable exception of AIRE), each of those famous rivers possessed its own stout knight in the babyhood of the world. Let me refer you to Book 4, Canto XI., stanzas xxxvii. and xxxviii. of the *Faerie Queene*, and you will find that their spirits (for they had all been slain) attended the Spousals of Medway and Thames when all the great rivers of the world met to do that famous pair honour. I will go so far as to save you the trouble of looking it up and give it from memory:

> Then came those sixe sad brethren like forlorne,
> That whilom were (as antique fathers tell)
> Sixe valiant Knights of one Fair Nymphe y-borne,
> Which did in noble deedes of armes excell
> And wonnèd there where now Yorke people dwell,
> Still *Ure*, swift *Werfe*, and *Oze* the most of might,
> High *Swale*, unquiet *Nide* and troublous *Skell*;
> All whom a Scythian king that Humber hight
> Slew cruelly, and in the river drownèd quite.

SCRIBE. After that I shall never forgive myself for giving up the *Faerie Queene* in despair, when I had ploughed my way through the first 674 pages; that is, to the end of Book 3. But how delighted those Four Lads will be when I give them this tremendous piece of news and reveal to them their ancient lineage!

PATER. And what then of Aire, who has (apparently) no forbears?

SCRIBE. Why, Aire, it seems, was the only one of them who escaped the clutches of that Scythian Knight, and he will be most proud of all!

IX

SCRIBE. At any rate, after such a baptismal oration on the part of Wharfe, you would imagine that they proceeded thenceforward as a chivalrous and amicable brotherhood.

But it was not so.

Hardly had they—not to speak irreverently—left the Font, than a great Hullabaloo broke forth again. Indeed, though I have assisted at a round dozen christenings and stood Godfather myself, both directly and by proxy, for half a dozen howling babes, never have I heard such a caterwauling as followed this.

Aire it was who began it.

"And now," he said, arrogating an authority not (as yet) delegated to him—"now that we have assumed the names and the tutelage of our own streams, I feel in honour bound to wipe out the stain inflicted on me by Ouse."

(*Consternation.*)

"I propose, therefore, to make the object of our Pilgrimage none other than the pure and holy source of my own river."

OUSE. What impudence!

WHARFE. Save us from madness!

SWALE. The upstart!

AIRE. I would have you walk steadily and proudly; and approach reverently and circumspectly the white glory which is Malham Cove: a cove which not only my own Nicholson, but also the great and unbiased Wordsworth honoured in a dignified and touching sonnet.

OUSE. I have read that sonnet; it ends, if I remember rightly, on a note of gloomy disillusion.

> Vain earth! false world! Foundations must be laid
> In Heaven; for, 'mid the wreck of IS and WAS,
> Things incomplete and purposes betrayed
> Make sadder transits o'er thought's optic glass
> Than noblest objects utterly decayed.

AIRE. I would have you remember the opening lines of the preceding Sonnet: No. XXXIII. I think: or possibly CCCXXXIII., clearly inspired by the same noble theme:

> Pure element of waters! wheresoe'er
> Thou dost forsake thy subterranean haunts
> Green herbs, bright flowers——

OUSE. AND SEWAGE WORKS.

AIRE.

> Rise into life, and in thy train appear.

And let me remind you, Ouse, of that old nominy of ours:

> Castleford lasses must needs be fair:
> They wash in Calder and rinse in Aire.

SWALE. Women indeed! Enough of this, or we shall miss OUR train. And that would be a calamity, for there is but one each day to Richmond, from where I purpose walking gravely, but cheerily, to the fount, well or spring of the Holy Swale itself: a rare Pilgrimage indeed!

AIRE. If I have any more of this nonsense, I shall go straight home.

OUSE. And wash your face!

AIRE. May you be poisoned and polluted by chemicals, offscourings and the baser oils!

WHARFE. Dragons of the Dogger Bank defend us all, if we have any more of this!

AIRE. For two pins——

OUSE. It is like you to *barge*!

WHARFE. Let us not forget the high purpose of our Pilgrimage, which is, not only to explore and pay homage to the marvellous beauty of our Fine Shire, without regard to any particular river or any particular Riding: but also to establish once again the Rights of Man, Two-Leggèd, on the Open Road.

SWALE. Well spoken, Wharfe! And that was why I proposed——

WHARFE. As I was saying——

SWALE. Order! Order! for Wharfe, who was saying——

WHARFE. That we should, in the first place, agree to control ourselves better, else disband here and now.

ALL. Yes! No! No! Yes!

WHARFE. Very well, then. Hear me out in peace while I outline the plan; and then be hanged to you all. . . .

Now, as you all know well enough, our County is the jewelled crown of England, and like all great crowns, it is studded with many precious stones.

AIRE. And rivers——

OUSE. Dam that tempestuous flood!

WHARFE. I have never yet, Aire, seen a crown studded with rivers, but perhaps the figure was ill-chosen; and I will amend it.

Our County, then, is—as I interpret Holy Writ—that Promised Land flowing with milk, honey, and (I make bold to add) rivers, denied to the undeserving Israelites, but by some wonderful dispensation of Providence, bequeathed in entail to us.

SWALE. As I can prove my own cheese——

WHARFE. Exactly at what period this noble Land was subdivided into three Ridings—or Trithings—I have never

been able to discover, despite the fact that I have consulted all the atrocious authorities who have contradicted each other on this point. Certain, however, it is that all the Ridings meet at York and acknowledge York as their centre point, crown and capital. Certain it is, too, that York (or Altera Romana, or Eboracum, or Eoferwic, or Jorwik, or, according to Domesday, Euruic) is the noblest, oldest, and grandest city on earth.

OUSE. Do I not flow through York?

AIRE. It is all I have against it——

WHARFE. Let us then, I repeat, agree to sink these absurd rivalries and remember only our common or rather extraordinary heritage of the County. Let us set out on our Pilgrimage as coheirs and equals, forgetting those foolish and arbitrary dotted lines by which the cartographers divide us. . . . Are we all agreed on that point: or, if I may so express it, that dotty point?

ALL. Agreed, Wharfe.

AIRE. As far as in us lies——

WHARFE. Now to the Route:

And here you must all remember that our time is limited: the risks enormous and the choice illimitable. Out of six thousand and sixty-six square miles we have to walk a round hundred straight miles.

AIRE. Thank the Lord we have not to walk a round hundred straight square miles.

WHARFE. For so has it been ordained by St. Wilfrid himself who has appeared to me in vision, and called for this last rally of the Two-Leggèd and this new Pilgrimage of Grace.

I propose, therefore, that we assemble at York and entrain for Barney Castle where our march begins. For Barney Castle not only stands near the northernmost purlieus of our Shire, but was one of the rallying-points in that former Pilgrimage of Grace which is to be our model. It has the advantage, too,

of being on the branch line from Darlington (another rallying-point), though that is a coincidence that does not enter into our calculations.

SWALE. There is a train at 7.55——

WHARFE. We shall certainly catch it. . . . Where was I?

SWALE. At Barney Castle——

WHARFE. Would to the Lord I were. . . . For it is from there I purpose walking very hurriedly over the Tees into our own County, where our true pilgrimage begins, and our perplexities multiply. And here I must appeal to that broad-mindedness in you, which is such a happy characteristic of the men of our Shire. I know I shall not appeal in vain to Ouse, who is the flower of courtesy in such things; nor to Aire, who would let no man exceed him in nobility and magnanimity; nor to Swale . . . But there is no need to appeal to Swale, for we shall begin walking in his own well-beloved corner of the dales.

As for myself, standing in spirit there at the crest of the County, I perceive with a certain delight, that we may, in our downward march, stumble on the higher reaches of my own river by way of Langstrothdale——

AIRE. I thought as much.

WHARFE. On the other hand—there is a remote possibility we may find ourselves so harried by the Hogs that we shall have to make a detour to the banks of Aire.

OUSE. God forbid!

AIRE. May the Hogs smite you hip and thigh!

WHARFE. But of this I am convinced; that we cannot do better than walk down the very backbone of our Shire: over the top of the Pennines from ridge to ridge and dale to dale, waving our mystical Banner, shouting our glorious cry, fighting our way inch by inch, yard by yard, mile by mile; exulting in our splendid Cause; turning aside neither for Hog on two wheels: Hog on three wheels: Hog on four wheels: Hogs in Screaming Phalanxes: Hogs drunk with

cocktails . . . in short, Hogs eager to trample us in the mire. . . .

Very well I know that there are a thousand more attractive ways we might go; a thousand glories nearer the heart of Ouse and of Aire: a thousand Shrines, Abbeys, Holy Places: a thousand beauties, splendours and Historical Landmarks: a thousand gushing rills, waterfalls, cascades, grots, woods and pleasances, that we shall miss in our descent. Nevertheless I say, that must be our way.

Ouse. Why?

Wharfe. Because it is the loftiest, toughest—and safest line of march; because we shall not so easily be run down on the top of the fells as we should be were we to wander about the Great Plain—for example.

Ouse. But this is cowardice!

Wharfe. Say, rather, prudent generalship, Ouse. For you must remember that we are but a small band; the rearguard of the Old Walkers; though we may well be the vanguard of the New Legions. Ours is a perilous path. Yet who knows but that we shall be the forerunners (or forewalkers) of a new Rising of the North; a new rebellion against the tyrannical oppressions and innovations of the South? Who knows but that, very shortly, Ouse may not himself be leading a stout body of Walkers across his great plain, and over his wolds? and Aire, yet another through Cravendale, and Swale through Arkengarthdale to Yoredale? who knows but that we may yet win the Open Road itself back to the old nobility to which it belonged? Who knows but that we may yet sweep the Hogs back to their sties, and restore the ancient rights and usages of Man Two-Leggèd? Who knows——

Ouse. God knows!

Wharfe. So be it then, I say. Nothing now remains but to start.

Aire. What? Before we have drawn up a proper Plan of Campaign; carefully examined our equipment and

supplies; fixed proposed stopping-places on the line of march; above all, paid due attention to our invaluable feet and legs that are to carry us over those stubborn miles?

Ouse. There are, I am told, a hundred Hog Chiropodists in your cities, if you care to risk your trotters.

Aire. Talk to me of Chiropodists! My feet are my most peculiar care, and I dare swear you will yet come hobbling to me for mercy as I stride resolutely on; will beg for recipes and balsams; but I shall turn a deaf ear.

Ouse. When, by the rigour of my marching, Aire, I have flayed your tender soles, I will, for very charity, teach you the secret of walking with your shoulders.

Swale. How I shall laugh when I get you both to Watling Street and walk you all off your feet!

Wharfe. I begin to wish I had left the pack of you at home, for you talk like tenderfeet; and it is such thorny themes as these that shatter all noble causes. Corns are not for the likes of us. Corns are the special preserve and prerogative of the Hogs who from their early youth are taught to screw their little toes into narrow patent-leather gyves, the better to hide their natal deformities. So you will see some Hogs with feet tapering to a fine point and others with toes hunched and bunched into a monstrous little knot. But our toes, I trust, are still—every one of them—free and pliant; our heels lithe and resilient; and our soles fed by the immortal oils. . . .

Swale. As for our shoes, I know a little cobbler in Keld——

Wharfe. Whisht! He is too precious to name!

Swale. O but you should watch him at work! These very shoes of mine are his last creation. How he laboured at them! How he hammered them and thwacked them and banged them and brayed them and stitched them and waxed them and coaxed them and wrought them into their final form!

Ouse. St. Crispin preserve him!

Wharfe. Hallelujah!

Aire. But I know a Big Boot and Shoe Emporium in my City Road——

Ouse. I thought those boots were not holy. But O you will suffer for them, Aire: you will pay for them—yet! Mark my words as they will surely mark your feet!

x

Pater. A moment, please. I am astonished to find that none of these lads speaks any of the dialects of the County: neither the gnarled speech of the West, nor the mellifluous Doric of the North or East.

Scribe. Dialect forsooth! I hope you will not let them hear so much as the rumble of that odious word! Indeed, I was on the point of explaining how it came to pass that all these strong-mouthed Fellows spoke (to the best of their ability) the jargon that is so curiously called the King's English——

Pater. I hope they were not ashamed of their own rough-hewn dialect!

Scribe. Dialect again! Have I not just warned you of the peril?

Pater. What nonsense is this?

Scribe. Nonsense enough and to spare. For let me tell you here and now (and I had it from their own lips), that Broad Yorkshire, as it is finely called, is no mongrel dialect at all, but a pure, natural, thoroughbred language; in short, the very Original Folk-Speech of the ancient nobility of these islands.

Pater. I am glad to hear it, though I confess I had always understood it to be no more than a local Doric like the Somerset or Lancashire dialects.

Scribe. Dialect again. . . . And Lancashire! A lewd

thought. Thank Heaven they can't hear you . . . or there is no telling what might happen——

PATER. As I was saying: a dialect chiefly remarkable for its close affinity to the Scandinavian and Teutonic tongues.

SCRIBE. Let me clear my throat and blow my nose and rid the air of all these nasty fabrications.

PATER. I had them all from a Cambridge Authority——

SCRIBE. Certainly they are worthy of him, and certainly he deserves horse-whipping for inventing them. But I would have had you hear first OUSE, then SWALE, then WHARFE, then AIRE speak up loud and bold in his original mother-tongue.

PATER. Nothing would better please me.

SCRIBE. Why the truth is, that though each of them proved to his own complete satisfaction that his particular dial——

PATER. Dial——?

SCRIBE. . . . That his own peculiar rendering of the folk-speech of the County was the correct one, none of them could entirely follow the other's interpretation. For the West Riding folk-speech is charged with something of the rugged thrust of the fells, and something, alas, of the corrupt jargon of the great cities; while the East is soft and gentle as the Wolds; and the North, in its own way, sufficiently akin to, yet different from both; so that, to put the matter in an eggshell, each of them began barging hotly in defence of his own rendering and God knows where it would have ended, or how soon they would have come to blows and felled each other for the sake of a word, had not WHARFE sternly called them to order, and commanded them, under pain of instant dispersal, to compromise by speaking—for the duration of the Pilgrimage (and as far as possible)—the King's English instead of their own more ancient and honourable Inglis.

PATER. Certainly, that goes a long way to explain their horrible lapses.

SCRIBE. But if you have any lingering doubts about this

question of dialect, I am ready to fire off not only a complete Vocabulary of five thousand incorrupt words—all of the blood royal—that I picked up in a parlous plight after the battle: but also to expound the whole Grammar and Syntax —the backbone and sinews—of this same noble speech: and to quote the rule for every example and the exception for every rule in the manner of all thoroughgoing grammarians. Moreover——

PATER. God forbid——

SCRIBE. Moreover, I am ready to enter the Lists with a whole regiment of household cavalry of Verbs that OUSE (who easily out-thundered the rest) cantered out in his own support, as for instance:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brust | Brast | Brussen (Brossen) |
| Breek | Brak | Brokken |
| Cheease | Choaze | Chozzen |
| Cum | Cam (Com) | Cum'd |
| Feyght | Fowt | Fowten |
| Git | Gat | Gitten, Gettin, Gotten |
| Lap | Lapt | Lappen |
| Lig | Lig'd | Liggen (Lig'd) |
| Preeave | Preeav'd | Provven (Pruvven) |

PATER. Hold!

SCRIBE. . . . And a thousand more such lusty brats. . . . Furthermore, I am willing (if challenged) to decline the verbs

Ti Be: Ti 'ev or ti ha'e,
Ti deea or div,
Ti Gan,

from the first person Singular of the Indicative Mood to the last person Plural of the Imperfect Subjunctive; for example:

Tha war, wur, mud, c'u'd, wad or s'u'd be,
Tha munnot be,
Ah deea, diz or duz,
Tha deean't or divn't,
Tha war, wur or wuz gannin——

PATER. Hold, I say, for the love of peace and brotherhood among men, and let them stammer along as best they may on the King's Highway in the King's English. . . .

XI

SCRIBE. As for that, let me first of all ask whether you are prepared to follow these Lads; not indeed, in person; for that, alas, is impossible; but are you ready to honour them with your spiritual presence and to link your name and fame with theirs?

PATER. And why not, pray?

SCRIBE. Because theirs is a dangerous mission indeed! Make no doubt of it, they will be discovered and pursued, and probably drawn and quartered for their faith. Depend upon it, too, that all who are in anywise implicated in their plot will be ruthlessly run to earth and likewise cut down.

PATER. I ask no more than to be their *Aske*.

SCRIBE. More Power to their legs! I will comfort them with your words. I will wag my head over them like the psalmist of old, and they will drink cans about in your honour!

PATER. If you would please me, push on after them before they get lost or destroyed! And let me at least be there to pronounce the last *Benedicere*. For I fear they will need it in the end!

And by the same token, it is a mystery to me, little Scribe, how it comes about that you can leave and rejoin these Lads at will; record all their ruminations, fulminations and objurgations—without once being missed or even mentioned by them! Never once, though I have listened diligently, have these Lads so much as mentioned your name!

SCRIBE. Why, that is easily explained.

PATER. I expected as much.

SCRIBE. I accompanied them in the omniscient capacity of Scribe or Author. And it is only my inherent passion for

publicity that makes me divulge my presence even to you. For I am no more and no less than that Ear, that Voice, that Eye and that Mind, without which no modern books could be written. I am He or It that records the secret acts and soliloquies of the Hero when he is alone. I am She or It that records the similar acts and soliloquies of the Heroine when she is alone with her Thoughts. Call me what you will: a Second Sight: an Emanation: a Page: a Squire—or, simply, a Scribe. Though I will grant you that I am different from other scribes in one small particular.

PATER. What's that?

SCRIBE. In the fact that I have a horror of overworking my little words, especially those two little twins: "he said" and "she said"—and, indeed, all their sesquipedalian brothers and sisters, such as:

(he or she) Replied
Retorted
Responded
Remarked
Prompted
Suggested
Answered
Explained
Exclaimed
Hinted
Hazarded
Interjected
Interlocuted
Interpolated
Interrupted (to mention no more);

and especially those little Hogs:

Hissed, Rapped and Flashed;

as well as all their blood cousins: the emphasising, explanatory, gesticulating Adjectives, such as:

Warmly and Coldly
Hotly and Coolly

Disdainfully and Respectfully
Modestly and Impudently
Excitedly and Calmly
Meekly and Proudly
Bravely and Fearfully
Cunningly and Honestly
Dashingly and Dreadfully
Breathlessly and Labouredly
Ponderously and Lightly
Thoughtfully and Nonchalantly
Boldly and Falteringly
Loudly and Softly
Swiftly and Slowly;

and a whole pack more. . . .

PATER. Why, what harm have they done?

SCRIBE. All these I found to be tottering on their last legs, so that—with the exception of a few of the stoutest-thewed—I have exonerated them from further service for the next four hundred pages. And, in like manner, those ham-strung inverted commas (" "), which have too long been compelled to stand on their heads and dangle their bandy-legs above them.

Rather than impose on any of these, therefore, I have recorded the immortal words of WHARFE, OUSE, AIRE and SWALE exactly as they came gushing from their mouths or well-springs. I cannot, indeed, imagine that *you* would have the slightest difficulty in identifying any of them, since they are all as distinctly coloured as their own rivers. Thus Wharfe uses only golden words; Swale, silver words; Aire, diamond words; and Ouse, pearly words. And none of them (praise be!) counterfeit words.

But for the benefit of any Third Party (such as a Hog reviewer hacking his way through four new novels at a sitting, and foaming at the mouth at the thought of the fourteen others trembling on his table;) or any other unfortunate on whom the Publisher may foist a copy gratis, I have deemed it advisable to stand each of these

Lads up on his own legs at the source of his words, so that everybody can distinguish t'other from which.

As for

> the wills and the shalls,
> the shoulds and the woulds,
> the thats and the whiches,

which (or that) rear up on the dark byways of prose to terrify my poor brother scribes, I will (or shall) only ask you to watch me lay all such Pedant's Familiars flat one after the other as I march gaily along.

But if you, my forthright Pater, think to see a should masquerading as a would, or a would that you suspect should be a should, cross yourself thrice and disbelieve the evidence of your senses.

And a plague on such witchery!

PATER. And a plague on all scribes who tipple their tip-tails like mad March hares.

SCRIBE. Follow me over Lendal Bridge into the heart of very York—and offer up an *Ave* for a safe-conduct!

. . . . .

XII

OUSE. Welcome, Lads, to my noble city!

SWALE. Surely, Ouse——

AIRE. *Your* city, Ouse?

OUSE. Certainly, Aire! And none more welcome to it than yourself!

AIRE. What monstrous impudence is this!

WHARFE. *Ho'd the whisht!* Ouse is justified in being proud of our Capital, the more so since it is so happily situate on his own broad river. But, Aire equally is right to question his pontifical air of ownership and authority. For York, as Ouse knows very well, belongs equally to each of us.

Nevertheless, we are willing to constitute Ouse our guardian and pilot while we are within these sacred walls.

OUSE. There is not a single Historical Landmark I cannot find for you: not a gate, yard, or bar to which I cannot instantly lead you: not a church, ruin, alley, or wall which I cannot point out. As for my great and incomparable Minster——

AIRE. I am afraid, Ouse, you will talk exactly like a guide-book, and spoil everything.

OUSE. I will talk out of my own hat if you please, and ennoble everything. And first we will take a walk round the walls where I propose to show you at a glance all the History of the World that need concern us. When you have carefully examined Micklegate (where you will say an *Ave* for *Aske*) and Walmgate and Monk Bar and Bootham, I will lead you through old Petergate to the Shambles, where my famous butchers have hacked up their prize cattle since the morning of the world. Then, if I can drag you away from this paradisal place, I will take you to Whip-ma-whop-ma-gate, where all good cobblers plied their craft before Progress pushed them into their little backyards and alleys, known only to the elect. And when you have seen these and a hundred other marvels—above all the grave relic which is St. Mary's—we will make a tour of my bulging inns, where I will introduce you all to our strong ale, and give you a humbler conceit of yourselves. Last of all—provided you are still sober—I will guide you down Fossgate, and dazzle you all with that aged, richly-timbered little Guildhall of ours, with its incredible chapel of the Holy Trinity, where Johannes Frebois and his saintly mercers foregathered wellnigh six hundred years ago. Finally, we shall plunge, one after the other, into my noble river, and so prepare ourselves for the great trials ahead——

AIRE. What! And catch our deaths of cold at the very start?

SWALE. Fortunately, we shall have only seventy-five minutes to spare!

WHARFE. How we should love to do it all, Ouse, had we time! But at present we have only one wish in the world, though it is no small wish.

OUSE. I know! It is the Minster. And what a tale I can tell about *that*!

AIRE. We have to choose, Ouse, between the Minster—and the Mass; and I rather think it will have to be the Mass. You, Ouse, like all of us, are happily of the Faith: the Faith that was the Cause and Inspiration of that great pile: the Faith that will one day certainly warm that place again, and cause the front doors to be thrown open to some succeeding Pilgrims like ourselves on some distant Holy Saturday morning.

Meantime, we should like you to show us the way to the nearest Catholic Church.

OUSE (*sadly*). Why, here we are at St. Wilfrid's!

. . . . .

XIII

SCRIBE. Now *you*, Pater, know very well what a great Morning it was on which these Lads found themselves in that ancient city of York. And it is not for the likes of me to tell you what they heard inside St. Wilfrid's, since at that very moment you were occupied with that identical ceremonial yourself.

But you may well wonder at what part of the prodigious service they entered; the Blessing of the New Fire; the Blessing of the Five Grains of Incense; the Blessing of the Mystical Candle Wrought by Bees; the Thundering of the Twelve Prophecies (so pregnant with counsel for the walker), or the Blessing of the Creature Water itself.

Actually it was precisely at that moment when the water is thrown to the "four quarters of the earth," and the Blessing pronounced:

*Quia te de paradisi fonte manare fecit, et in quattuor fluminibus totam terra rigare præcipit. . . .*[1]

What more could man ask? Here surely was a direct message—How? you say. It was not meant for these Lads?

PATER. Most assuredly not.

SCRIBE. But I tell you they were the only Four Rivers present, and it was Wharfe, Ouse, Aire and Swale . . . or nothing.

PATER. There are no such names in the Missal.

SCRIBE. Nor in the book of Revelation neither?

PATER. Decidedly not.

SCRIBE. That is great pity and a great omission: but it is not, perhaps, too late to remedy it. For to say truth, it came somewhat as a revelation to the Lads themselves, and yet the moment the Four Rivers were mentioned and each of them got a great splash of holy water smack in his eyes (for they were standing perilously near the font), they realised simultaneously the hidden meaning. And a great joy came over them, and a great pride too. Indeed, after that there was no holding them back, and they who had observed such a praiseworthy restraint when speaking of the County, and their several Ridings, came perilously near to boasting, though naturally not a word was spoken until Mass itself was ended and they were in the highway again.

PATER. I should hope not.

SCRIBE. Whereupon Ouse, rendered reckless by his recent benediction, stepped rashly off the pavement as if he would there and then challenge any Hog in York to mortal combat. And at that very instant a great green gleaming Hog bore down on him from behind (as is the way of Hogs), and would have squashed him to a pulp had not Swale, with rare presence of mind, seized Ouse by the shoulder and dragged him to safety, as you shall hear for yourself.

[1] Who caused thee to flow from the fountains of Paradise and commanded thee to water the whole earth with thy four rivers.

XIV

SWALE. None of us, Ouse, doubts your incomparable courage; but you cannot be allowed to throw your life away like that at the outset of the Pilgrimage. Even the bold Gawain himself, ere he confronted the Green Knight, donned his lady's magic girdle of green silk. But you have no such girdle; and even if you had, it is very certain it would be no more effective against the onslaught of that Green Hog than your own green garters.

OUSE. I fear no Hog in shining armour: be it green, or pink, or scarlet, or gold, or blue, or putty, or any of the more revolting colours peculiar to their hordes.

WHARFE. All greatly to your credit, Ouse, but we cannot afford to lose such a valiant walker so soon. And, in any case, as we have only five more minutes to spare in this beloved city, let us not fritter them in futile encounters.

OUSE. Very well, then; we will step inside the Minster, for I shall not be comfortable in my mind until I prove to Wharfe that it is open for inspection.

. . . . .

SCRIBE. And so to the train——

PATER. But first, the Minster!

SCRIBE. I am sorry you have missed that—but all the more reason why we should not miss the train. . . . There it goes! The green flag . . . the whistle. . . . There is not a moment to lose!

PATER. Well, I'm d——

SCRIBE. I'll tell the world.

. . . . .

SCRIBE. A moment while I mend my bellows! . . . That was a near squeak if you like! But how easily *they* caught it! I hope you saw them sprint the full length of the long

platform like wingèd Mercurys—looking for an empty Third-Class Smoker. For a moment I thought they were going to board the engine, but, fortunately, Aire dropped his haversack, and Ouse the tickets, so that they had to make shift with a luggage van.

PATER. I could forgive them much—but not a train! they who swagger so much about their hind legs and firm feet!

SCRIBE. Why, then, in the matter of trains they were no fanatics. They looked upon trains with that broad, generous, urbane, charitable and withal Catholic spirit of toleration which is such a pleasing trait in the character of all men of the Faith.

PATER. And what of the HOGS you have been so mercilessly calumniating?

SCRIBE. The HOG is a thing quite beyond the pale. He has nothing of the puffing puffability of trains which endears even Walkers to them. He has no manners at all: no saving graces at all. Nothing. Here he is—which is like his impudence—butting into the very train in which my Lads have taken refuge while I make their excuses to you. I say: be hanged to the Hog and all his works and pumps.

PATER. You were talking about trains——

SCRIBE. A harmless kind of amusement at all times! Let me resume the thread of my argument in their defence.

PATER. You mean in your defence.

SCRIBE. And in the first place, I will say this of trains: they keep strictly to their own iron roads. It is rare for a train to come barging into the ordinary walks of man. They do not shriek down one's little street at two o'clock of the morning, nor charge into one's own little legs the moment one steps off the causeway. On the contrary, they are so courteous and humble that rather than shove their way along the open road, they bore through the very bowels of the earth until such time as they can conveniently rejoin their own iron road under the sky.

There is, I protest, a certain chivalry about that which pleases me.

PATER. I take it, then, that it was purely a chivalrous impulse which led these Lads to begin their Pilgrimage in a train?

SCRIBE. Not a doubt of it! It was, so to speak, a gesture of amiability: a mark of fraternisation.

PATER. What! They would even acknowledge trains as brothers?

SCRIBE. To the marvellous possibilities of Evolution there is (according to the Scientists) no end; no tail; and one can even visualise a distant Type of Man born without legs at all; but even the Scientists have not yet predicted men endowed from birth with an internal engine and a fixed pair of wheels. . . . An interesting speculation nevertheless——

PATER. I cannot allow this train of thought. It is entirely heretical.

SCRIBE. It was not so much a train of thought as a hoggish thought, intended to prove that I recognised no sort of affinity to a train at all. Nor ever shall. Would to the Lord I had never mentioned the things. Did I not intend to begin this noble chronicle at Barney Castle, and here I am stuck fast in a miserable train, and have not yet mentioned their one real virtue which mollifies the Walker and inclines him favourably to them.

PATER. Out with it.

SCRIBE. It is that they are so contrived by their cunning designers as to make the Walker love still more ardently (if that be possible) the art of self-propulsion. For in the third-class carriages, his legs are so confined that in a very short time he suffers agonies of cramp and spasms of dreadful paralysis until he can hardly refrain from screaming out with the pain of it. Worse than this, his precious feet are ruthlessly stamped on by late-comers who crawl into the carriage in such numbers as wellnigh to asphyxiate him there and then.

No sooner has the train started than he is assailed and bombarded by trunks, hat-boxes, cans, canisters and similar missiles dropping off the rack provided for that purpose immediately above his sensitive head. Three times, at least, on every journey, he is compelled to root frantically through all his pockets, and finally to grovel under his seat to find his miserable ticket so that it, too, may be mauled, punched, and generally maltreated.

But if, by ill-hap, he is inveigled into a first-class carriage, he is compelled to sit cheek by jowl with HOGS—a murrain on that word!—and be dragged into a discussion about oils and engines.

How delighted he is, after such an incarceration, to recover the use of his legs again, and step out blithely along the platform to the Road!

PATER. Certainly, anything will be better than this rigmarole. . . .

SCRIBE. Lastly, consider that the Puffing Billy rescues the harassed Walker from the perils and massacres of the great cities that are now so entirely in the clutches of the Hogs; takes him leisurely but safely out of harm's way and deposits him graciously on the White Road again; prior to puffing placidly on its own contemplative way. . . .

PATER. I have considered it all, and I am still sceptical, and still unconvinced. But I am more than ever determined to have the whole truth of the matter!

SCRIBE. How tedious, captious, and cantankerous you truth-hunters are! None the less, believe me or not: here already is Darlington! . . .

XV

PATER. I left them at York, if you please.

SCRIBE. True, but it would be tedious to relate the incidents of the journey. They form no part of the Pilgrimage proper: and they are much better concealed.

PATER. I am determined to have the truth.

SCRIBE. The truth is, Swale made himself a confounded nuisance all the way up to Darlington.

PATER. I confess I should like to hear Swale's version of all this.

SCRIBE. And so you shall — more's the pity, for the fellow was not to be quieted until he had been promised a day (as they say in the Parliament of Fools) on which he could have his say and be done with it; or as Aire pithily put it, be damned to it!

PATER. I will tolerate no strong language.

SCRIBE. And for your especial benefit I have considerably watered it down; but you should have heard them at Darlington.

PATER. A charming place I am told: and very historical.

SCRIBE. Why, to speak softly, I like not Darlington. It is a sad Quaker place, and when you step out of the train —with your heart in your boots—you realise that it is over the border. But if you want to know anything else about it, look it up in the Handbook of Durham, for I will say no more.

PATER. Come, come! This is a poor spirit for such a professor of humanity, urbanity and charity as you lay claim to be. Let me hear how they fared there.

SCRIBE. You mean how they came nigh to starving there: how even the "Shoot and Boo" itself booted them empty away.

PATER. I can never believe that an inn with so noble a name as that would turn away the last guard of the Walkers without a beanfeast.

SCRIBE. Certainly you will need all the faith you can muster to believe half the strange things that there befell, yet (as the old song says):

*It's true, sir, it's true, sir, I never told a lie,*
*And if you go to Darlington—you'll see the same as I.*

That being so, you will, I hope, believe me when I say that Darlington refused my Lads mere Boiled Halibut—on a technicality.

PATER. Boiled Halibut, indeed! I am astonished at you. They did perfectly right to refuse them such a dish! Even were Yorkshire Pudding and Pie not to be had in those outlandish parts, at least, they might have satisfied their carnal cravings on Roast Beef and Ale, and left Boiled Halibut and the like to the dyspeptic Hogs. Indeed, I begin to wonder——

SCRIBE. And I, too, begin to wonder whether you have forgotten the Canon Law of the Church, especially the Laws of Fasting and Abstinence. Collect your scattered wits, and remember that this was Holy Saturday, and as it was not yet twelve o'clock noon, the crabbed fast of Lent was still operative.

PATER. Mea Maxima culpa.

SCRIBE. For a penance walk a round forty miles with peas in your shoes and boiled halibut in your haversack! Meantime, consider Aire's pasquinade pinned on the door of the "Shoot and Boo":

. . . . .

AIRE.

O miserable Shoot and Boo,
Our kind regards to you!
But don't you think you better
Be called "The Carburetter"?
Put on your Bill of Fare
Hogs only are served here
With Oils and Halibut:
But woe betide the Brute
Who, Crawling on Two Legs,
Here for refreshment begs.
For him we shall salute
With the Order of the Boot!

SWALE. Let us stamp out of this place and gain the station:

else who knows but that Darlington may do to us what it did to the noble forty in the Rising—string us up to save further trouble.

Ouse. They are far more likely to mow us down the moment they recover from their fright at such a strange sight.

XVI

Scribe. And, indeed, as they stepped into the square, the astonished Hogs came at them from all sides, as if determined to decimate them there and then; but on the threshold of the station they were accosted by a balladmonger, on whom the Hogs had evidently done their worst. Seated by the roadside, with no legs at all, he motioned them to stop, and handed them each a broad sheet, on which was printed verse of his own composition. Harried as they were by the more daring of the Hogs, they gained the sanctuary of the curb, and stopped to commiserate with him on his sad plight, as you shall hear.

. . . . .

Balladmonger. Don't you worry about me. Look after your own legs while you have them, and take care to attack *them* (shaking his fist at the smoking Hogs) with more discretion than I showed. For I was mooning about the Road writing this very song in praise of dust, when a huge Hog bore down on me and whipped off my shanks before I could scramble to the hedge. Even so, I pulled myself together there, and finished my song with a malediction. I hope you will like it, for it will only cost you a penny.

Aire. Let Wharfe recite these noble lines, since he is so fond of chuntering bad verse of his own.

Wharfe. Keep guard while I do:

SONG IN PRAISE OF DUST

Ages ere the oldest gargoyle
'Gan to grin o'er Abbey Aisle
Dust in loads was smeared on roads
To engrace them like a smile.

. . . . .

Dust that trembles like a glory
On the hedgerows when the moon
Sheds a white, enchanting light
Making night a frosty noon!

. . . . .

Dust that tells an ancient story
And is one with ageless roads
Harking back on traceless track
To unstcried episodes!

. . . . .

BALLADMONGER. (It was at this point that I lost my legs, boots, dust and all, but not, I am happy to say, my inspiration.)

Cust then be all charabancs
And the Hogs all cust!
Who abuse the proper use
Of our English dust:
Scattering in a blinding cloud
What was meant, I trust,
To delight the pilgrim's sight
And to make long journeys light
Precious English dust!

. . . . .

I would not be hard on them,
(At the very wust)
Heaven send the Hogs may end
Choked with English dust!

Dust that tell an ancient story
And is one with ageless roads
Harking back on traceless track
To unstoried episodes!

WHARFE. By the Lord! A rare song indeed!

AIRE. An excellent pennyworth.

SWALE. I like choked. It is a fine thought and well worth this shilling, my lad.

OUSE. It makes me long to get out of this Hog-infested hole, and strike the road again.

BALLADMONGER. I have lots more in my bag. Let me read you some myself——

WHARFE. No, no, no; by no means! That could not be bettered: besides, we shall undoubtedly miss our train.

AIRE. And we are starving.

BALLADMONGER. But here is food for thought:

> Who knows if that Hog who has lately run over
> A Beak, may repent and turn out a Rover?
> Who knows but that Hog with a last glance on Home
> Will stand on his feet and step out for Rome?
> Who knows?

OUSE. No, indeed! I cannot allow that thought. It is weak and insipid, and in the last degree improbable. I should scrap that one——

BALLADMONGER. There are nineteen more "Who knowses." Wait a moment, for the love of Gawd.

### XVII

SCRIBE. But they were off.

PATER. And caught the train for Barney Castle?

SCRIBE. Indeed, no; nothing so conventional. That is to say, they missed the train by a sandwich, but it was enough.

PATER. What? After all this fuss, they missed the train! At least, I trust, they set out there and then on the dusty road you are so fond of apostrophising, and stepped out blithely for the dales?

SCRIBE. You must remember that Aire was starving; and it is the height of folly to march on an empty stomach.

Besides, there was (happily) another train half an hour later, so that they had just time to break the long fast in the railway refreshment-room. . . . I mean the one on Platform No. 2.

PATER. I am afraid this gets from bad to worse. On the whole I think I would end on that note, for, indeed, you cannot sink lower.

SCRIBE. Hoity-toity! End before I have fairly begun? You asked for the truth and I tell you the truth, but if you cannot swallow it without a deal less splutter, I shall begin to hedge and garble like any frowsy Anglican Historian who begins the History of the World in the year 1543. I should make a deal more progress I warrant you!

PATER. At least you would make a show of progress, and slur over these dreadful lapses. As it is we get nowhere.

SCRIBE. On the contrary, we get our teeth into some excellent beef, our lips toy with a colourable imitation of ale, and our lungs inhale some truly excellent smoke.

For it wanted but two minutes to noon when Aire led the way into an eating-room, and seized hold of a Menu; while Ouse pulled out an enormous pouch of tobacco.

Now, at twelve o'clock, the long Fast is over and a man who has kept his Lent with a contrite spirit and denied himself many things, feels his heart uplifted again in anticipation of the Morning. So it was with those Lads who had each denied himself — for six weeks — not only the proscribed foods and fal-de-dals, but also—those most desirable of all foods—ale and tobacco. And while Wharfe mumbled to himself:

> Tid, Mid, Miseray, Carlin to Paum,
> Collop Monday, Pancake Tuesday, Frutus Wednesday,
> Maundy Thursday, Good Friday—Holy Saturday,

imagine, if you can, their heady exultation when they struck matches and inhaled and tasted the first fragrant wreaths of smoke. Consider with what complacence they

quaffed that first tankard of Ale! Reflect how bedizzied they were when, under the influence of Aire's directions, beef, potatoes, cabbage, gravy, apple-pie, cheese, biscuit and butter, and all for half a crown—and double helpings for Aire—were suddenly pushed under their noses in rapid succession!

And then—if you are so minded—criticise them for missing their train!

PATER. I confess this is like no Railway Refreshment-Room I have ever heard of; for I have always understood them to be sad and gloomy places, built on a bedrock of grit-stone sandwiches, watered by pale streams of ineffectual tea.

SCRIBE. Then it is high time to scotch that lie; and I am happy to do it, for I know many a hoggish Restaurant where the brew is much more poisonous.

. . . . .

Now, as you well know, the railway from Darlington to Barney Castle (with the exception of an interesting little loop at West Tees Bridge) keeps strictly and drearily to the Durham side of the river.

I think that is all!

PATER. . . . All?

SCRIBE. *Sursum Corda!* Here we are at Barney Castle. And here, at last, is the very Road.

PATER. I shall believe it when I hear them marching.

## XVIII

SCRIBE. But stay: there is one little point which I should like to clear up before they proceed a step farther.

PATER. You mean before they make a step at all.

SCRIBE. Not at all! For they are already stamping about the platform looking for the exit. But while Wharfe is

struggling with his haversack (a word derived from our native havercakes); and Swale is unfurling his maps prior to leading them by the shortest route over the border into their own Shire; and while Aire is moodily contemplating his shoes; and Ouse is going madly through all his pockets in search of the four lost tickets—I say here is an excellent opportunity for clearing up the question of Authority or Historical Accuracy.

I do not know whether you are burthened with a library out there in the bush. Haply you are one of those erudite men who throw off long strings of facts, figures and quotations from some ditch in the middle of China; and then (when they have paralysed all humble men) sneak in a saving clause saying that they are writing far away from all books of reference, and may have erred in a minor word though not (of course) in the essential passages.

For myself, I have no patience with such fellows. The truth, I hold, must be rooted out at any cost and inconvenience. That is why, at this very moment, I am surrounded and wellnigh suffocated with books of References (all sharply at variance) concerning the County of Durham. That is why I had to crawl along the very basement of my Library looking for the truth.

PATER. A humble spirit indeed.

SCRIBE. But how pained I was to discover the curious fallacies into which these well-meaning old prosers have fallen anent our own Shire. In the matter of origins alone . . . But Ouse, in a subsequent passage, will certainly put *that* right; and I will leave it to him.

Again, how surprised I was at the great gaps in our story as related by even the most long-winded chroniclers. This, too, is a matter which it is high time to clear up: and Swale will once and for all clarify much of this muddle and obscurity with his invaluable observations.

For the rest, all those data which have hitherto eluded the

learned and quite stumped the vulgar, will at last be brought to light. For it is certainly time.

And for my part I make only one stipulation; and that is, that you will not divulge these invaluable discoveries until I read my projected paper and am made a Fellow of the Royal Society; for though our County is already very rich in Fellows — particularly Boon Fellows — there is always room for one more. This much I will whisper in your ears alone: that having, after a prolonged investigation of the known documents, satisfied myself that the only men who know anything about our origins are the old monks, I shook the dust of the new Libraries from my eyes, nose, ears, feet and fingers, and set out there and then to find the Oldest Monk in the Shire. Having found him, I pinioned him: nor let him go until I had heard the whole story from his own lips and checked it off item by item with the various stories told by Wharfe, Aire, Ouse and Swale. Brother Moone is his name, and a good name too; for he is so very old that his shining pate glistens like that lustrous Orb itself, while his silvery tongue has all the magic and the splendour of moonshine on our rivers.

PATER. Moonshine on your rivers, indeed! That gives me to pause.

SCRIBE. Nothing so gives me to pause as your interminable interruptions; and I warn you again that unless you can keep a better curb on your tongue, I shall remain as mum as the Hog's idols.

PATER. Nobody, I think, has devoted more of his leisure moments to the study of idols than I: Idolatry, Demonism, Darwinism, Devil-worship, Fire-worship, Zoolatry, Fetichism, Sorcery, Necromancy, Theurgy, Thaumaturgy, Mumbojumboism, Shamanism—in short, every species of paganism, every Dumb God and Oracle has, at one moment or another, tivitated my fancy, but I confess I have never yet heard of, nor clapped eyes on, a Hog's Idol,

and if only to make my collection complete, I beg you to send me one by the very next mail.

SCRIBE. I was not referring to their lesser deities: those smaller mummeries and fuzzy-wuzzies; nor those graven images of serpentine danseuses, nor their Tom Cats, Teddy Bears, White Hands, Felixes and Bonzos; nor even their more ambitious creations, such as silver poodles, golden cockerels, and winged Mercurys. I was not (Heaven forbid) thinking of those metal caricatures of our own beloved St. Christopher, which they stick up on their engines as a propitiation to outraged Heaven. For St. Christopher, who stood twelve cubits high and carried a tree for a staff (as can be proved by his picture in Pickering Church), is the patron saint of true travellers—not of Hogs.

On the contrary, I was referring solely to their Major Gods, which are wrought of iron and stand erect and immovable at wayside shrines throughout this unhappy land. I was referring to their great Yellow God and Red God, between which (or whom) exists a most frightful Feud, and who between them more or less monopolise the worship and the sacrifices of all the Hog-hordes who desecrate the road.

Both of them, unfortunately, are too heavy and too cumbersome to remove; and even if I could confiscate one without being massacred by a revenging Hog-High-Priest, I could never pack it up in such a way as to comply with the Government regulations for the dispatch of Post Parcels (Colonial). Rather than have you remain in a state of ignorance, however, I took the precaution to sketch both the Yellow God and the Red God, when the backs of their priests were turned. I do not claim that my sketches portray the real sly cunning and awful intelligence of these Rival Hog Gods, but I do say that I took the most meticulous pains to fasten the outlines of those frightful things indelibly on your memory.[1]

[1] Too frightful to reproduce.

PATER. I am all impatience to see them. Indeed, I adjure you to send them in advance of your book, which I fear will never be completed.

SCRIBE. But for you, I should be over the border already. As it is, I feel compelled to give you a succinct account of the rite or ritual observed at the sties or—as they are called —GARAGES[1] of these Gods, if only to enable you to take the necessary steps to counteract this idolatry should it ever spread to your virginal bush. And by this token I will segregate this in a chapter to itself lest it should contaminate this pure and holy text.

XIX

SCRIBE. Imagine (if you can) one of these brazen idols standing in some once lovely and unspotted village. A favourite place is outside the smithy where—in happier times—the village smith himself used to stand.

Down the (once) white road—as far as the eye can pierce the clouds of dust—comes a chain of goggled Hogs. Heads down, collars up, eyes starting out of their sockets, feet screwed on to splash-boards, bodies hunched, mouths open, teeth gaping, a horrible fume pouring from their back pipes, engines roaring, spokes flashing, horns screaming—come the Hogs and Hoggets on two wheels: all noisome, all noisy and all damned. Hard on their track, sometimes passing them in petulant frenzy, come the Hogs on three wheels and the Hogs on four wheels; and all of them obsessed and pursued by the Speed Fiend (who never allows them an instant's respite). Many of these Hogs—for greater security—are entirely surrounded by a kind of iron palisade: others shrink behind their wind-screen, for the Hog is terrified of the wind: that pure elemental spirit of earth and heaven; he cowers from it—unlike the joyous pilgrim

[1] A word derived from Garbage.

who loves it to beat upon his face. Hateful to the Hog is the wind: especially the head-wind which, by a just irony, he is doomed to have always against him. In the main, as you will rightly observe, the Hogs stick to one direct line of advance; that is to say, one battalion (or rather, horde—for battalion is far too noble a word for such things) monopolises the left side of the Road, another horde the right side.

Nevertheless, your eagle eye will also perceive a third horde of Irregulars boring now to the right and now to the left and only escaping destruction by the cunning of the devil; these Hogs, you might imagine, were under the influence of bad drink and you would certainly be right. These Hogs, in a word (too chaste for them), are drunk; most abominably drunk. And when they reach the next town, they will undoubtedly effect a most horrible slaughter among the few remaining Pedestrians.

So they come, in wild procession, and a noise like the cracking of a thousand machine-guns and sharpshooters with them. But as they approach their brazen Idol, each and all of them lifts up his eyes (though only for a moment) in reverence; while every now and then, some abandoned Hogs who cannot keep pace with the rest and fear the Speed Fiend will have the better of them, withdraw from the chain and advance towards the Idol with a loud honk of salutation and a feeble splutter of appeal. Whereupon the priest and devotees of the Idol, smeared and begrimed with their unholy oils, slink out from their sties and greet them obsequiously.

Immediately they appear the Hogs prostrate themselves before the Idol, sometimes even crawling on all-fours underneath their engines in token of absolute fealty. When they wriggle out again and—by a great effort—stand upright on their splay feet—they utter their incantation in their barbarous hoggish tongue. Translated into English, it goes somewhat like this:

The Hog (*with a propitiatory glance at the Idol*). Can I have a canful?

Priest (*approaching the Idol, mumbling a mouthful of hoggish jargon, and grasping a brazen arm*). You can.

The Hog (*tendering coins*). Most Puissant, Oilful and Generous God! Would it please It to accept a humble offering?

Priest. With both paws. (*Takes.*)

The Hog. May his oils increase!

The Idol then being mollified allows the priest to pump the requisite canful of adulterated oil from the inexhaustible reservoir which it guards, into the Hog's parched engine. This being done, the Hog releases a dense and poisonous smoke from his exhaust as a thankoffering to the God who has dealt so generously by him, at the same time emitting a furious salvo of farewell; and with a final and fiendish honking of his horn, rushes back to join the flying chain.

Immediately he has gone another Hog——

Pater. Pest on the Hogs and their Idols!

My head is swimming with oils; my ears are cracking with their outrageous roarings. Away with them all and let me hear how Wharfe and his fellows are faring.

Scribe. *Patientia O Pater Violentiam superant!* That is to say, all in good time. I have deemed it advisable to portray the Hog here and one of the Hog's Idols with all his works and pumps with some degree of thoroughness, if only that you might the better understand the dangers which awaited these noble Lads the moment they set foot on the Road. Do not, however, imagine that I have described the embattled might of the Hog hordes: all I have done is to show how he appears in a peaceful village street where, under the spreading chestnut-tree, the village smithy used to stand and where now, over a reservoir of Oil, the Hog's God stands.

Having done that, I am quite ready to join those adventurous Lads on the Road.

PATER. I shall believe it when I hear them marching.

SCRIBE. Say rather when you hear them talking; for though I cannot hope you will hear the music of their heels, I warrant you shall certainly hear the echo of their voices. For the Walker is a Talker——

PATER. Not a doubt of it!

SCRIBE. When he is not interrupted. . . .

XX

SCRIBE. Nevertheless, I am determined to have my say out; for I have had this thought gestating in my mind ever since I began. . . . You will remember, I hope, the 115th Psalm?

*The idols of the gentiles are of silver and gold: the works of the hands of man. They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not. They have ears and hear not; they have noses and smell not. They have hands and feel not; they have feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throats. Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them!*

Are not the Hog's Idols cast in the same mould as these—though wrought of a far baser metal? And has not this terrible curse fallen on the Hogs themselves? They have mouths and speak not: eyes and see not: feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throats. . . .

Can the Hog feel? The Hog's hands (let me tell you) are encased in gauntlets, insensible to everything except oil and plugs.

Can the Hog talk? The Hog (let me assure you) was long ago deprived of the lovely gift of speech. A few cant hoggish words he can mumble, I will grant you; though I have with my own ears heard a Hog boast that he had driven a hundred miles without uttering a single syllable! Indeed, so limited is the Hog's vocabulary to-day that it is said that he can bore his way all over the Empires of the world and yet find

a brother Hog who can understand the little he can say —which is all about engines and Idols. So that there has grown up a kind of international Hog jargon or lingo by means of which a Cincinnati Hog can sit down at table and mumble with a Kentish Hog, a French Hog and a whole styful of English Hogs, and yet make himself perfectly clear in his own hoggish way. But God help the honest Pilgrim who is seated at the next table!

Lastly, I ask, can the Hog cry through his throat? Granted he can holloa for oil, but that was not what the psalmist had in mind at all; he referred rather to the gift of song. . . . Can a Hog sing? Well, I have seen many strange sights and heard many strange noises in my journeyings up and down the Shire, but I have never yet heard a Hog singing above the screaming of his engine. . . .

PATER. Be thankful for small mercies. . . .

SCRIBE. Happy the Walker who has escaped this doom of dumbness and insensibility! For, as he walks, how yarely he cries out through his throat! How jubilantly he sings snatches and catches of his own composition (for they are the best songs of all); or joins in the chorus of his companions' songs (and they are the second-best songs); or (but only when he is reduced to the last extremity) sings the sad songs of German balladmongers. . . .

And when he has eased his soul in song how volubly he talks to his companions (and this is the best kind of talk); or (while they are talking) stores up in his mind his most secret and incommunicable ideas; or (if he have the bad hap to be a scribe) jots down on his little pads the splendid things he means to claim as his own when he locks himself up and writes his book of travels for the world to laugh at (and this is the driest kind of talk of all).

PATER. Why then record it?

SCRIBE. To guard against that occasion of sin.

PATER. What? You are not going to tell me what these

stanch fellows (now so strangely quiet) said? Have the Hogs laid them by the heels already; have they, too, been stricken with this doom of dumbness; are they, too, on the way to perdition? Or have they turned toes and fled back to Durham?

SCRIBE. God forbid. They are even now striding valiantly past the Castle. Swale, it is true, has led them into a cul-de-sac, and cannot find the way out again, for until he is over the border he is in strange land indeed. But by the time I am ready to rejoin them, I will vouch for it they will be heading for the dales.

PATER. You are not (I hope) proposing to monopolise this story any longer? You are not going to preach to me any more about the excellence of these Lads' talk, and then deprive me of the pleasure of hearing it?

SCRIBE. I should never forgive myself if you did not hear at least the mighty reverberations of that cannonade of conversation. I am only warning you that you will but hear the echo: for what am I but the echo of their voices? That being agreed, I will ask you also to imagine the thud of their feet, the rhythm of their marching, the poetry of their motion, the fire of their eyes and the thirst in their throats as they stride along.

PATER. What! They are actually proceeding at last? Have a care, for I have my eye on you here!

SCRIBE. Turn it rather on those rare Bullyrocks, my friends! Look at them now standing up, each of them on his two legs in the very middle of the road: the County before them and the Hogs behind!

What a sight it is for the gods! There is WHARFE, looming gigantic as Whernside in the blue mist, and recking nothing at all of that little cloud of a haversack on his back! Next to him is AIRE, tall as a Town Hall and lean (as the novelists say) in proportion. His legs at the moment are (fortunately) enveloped in mist, so that I cannot describe them. Abreast of him is OUSE—making up in breadth what he lacks in

height—fat as his pastures, broad as his bullocks, strong as his stallions, wise as his wolds.

And alongside him is SWALE. How tempestuous is Swale! There is about him the laughing insolence of his waterfalls and the swiftness of his own river beyond Keld; the majesty of Mickle Fell; the toughness of his hardy tegs and wethers —and, withal, the roundness and geniality of his own cheese!

Think of all the giants who have ever stamped across the high places of the world before! Think of Roland and Charlemagne; think of Hannibal and Cæsar; think of Caractacus in chains; think of every Lad who has ever bestrid our own terrific hills. And then confess (as you must) that none of them stood up more finely, more valiantly, or more conspicuously (alas) than these Four Lads ahead.

. . . . . .

PATER. Step on to the Road without more Ado, before I turn my back on you.

SCRIBE. Without more Ado!

. . . . . .

XXI

SCRIBE. . . . Without more Ado. . . .

No wonder you are all a-tremble, little pen! No wonder your mouth is suddenly dried of its ink and a paleness comes over your words! But come, gird yourself and let us have no more of this weakness! Look to your accoutrement. See to it that your nib is sturdy, straight and clean; and ready for a hundred miles of vigorous marching. If it be cross-legged, bandy-legged, timber-toed or carbuncled, let us remedy it at the very start, for we cannot stop to cast shoes on the march. See to it that the blue ink courses freely through your noble veins and that your eye is shining clear.

Reflect how happy is your state compared with that of

those dolorous Knights, your peers: for you have whole acres of white Road all to yourself and not a Hog can come within smell of you!

Think of them, and take heart of grace: for you shall yet be famous among all the pens of the world. When the heavy-jowled, club-footed and bejewelled fountain pens of the grosser Hogs are all rotting and corroding, you shall be preserved in a glass museum and exhibited to the envy and admiration of the world! Posterity shall acclaim you as that Prince of Pens that accompanied Wharfe, Ouse, Aire and Swale on their glorious Pilgrimage!

And if that be not reward enough to spur you on, let me tell you that you shall yet *lie* with the Pens of the Immortals. Not Shakespeare, not Rabelais, not Yorick, not Malory, not Froissart, not Spenser, not Raleigh, not Chaucer, not Asser, not Cæsar, not Homer, not Mandeville, not Bunyan (indeed), not Defoe, not Swift, not Cervantes, not Smollett, not — Boswell: no, not any of these Pens that are now lying in state, but shall hail you as of the blood royal and welcome you to their lairs!

PATER. What makes you so certain of all this?

SCRIBE. Inklings of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood!

. . . . . .

Good little pen, pure as your holy rivers, tough as the boulders of your cairns, white as the limestone of your scars: Beware!

After you will come the critics, venomous as vipers, envious as toadies, nauseous as Hogs! And they will throw mud at you and attempt to defile you; they will cover you with abuse: they will accuse you of iniquities. They will even doubt the purity of your sources; they will treat you contumeliously. And after them will come the Antiquarians hurling horrible Authorities and breathing fire and slaughter.

And after them will come the Archæologists, armed with picks and spades, and pelting you with rocks and stones. And after them will come the squabbling Historians fighting among themselves for the honour of bemauling you. And after them will come the Hog-Cartographers, numbering and measuring your miles by their speedometers. And after them will come the sad-eyed Prosodists, meticulously measuring the metre and feet of your jolly little songs with their foot-rules.

But you, little pen, will ignore them all. For you (as I have said before) will be lying and laughing with the Immortals. . . .

*En Avant!*

# BOOK II

## THE ROAD

### I

WHARFE. Confusion seize such culs-de-sac, Swale!

AIRE. It is greatly to be hoped that you are better acquainted with your own Riding than you appear to be with this pestilential Barney Castle.

OUSE. For myself, I am heartily sick of this County of Durham. Are we, I should like to ask you, Swale, to spend the whole of this blessed afternoon like ferrets in warrens; or are we to step out at once into our own spacious lands?

WHARFE. And how many more acres of that enormous map are you about to unfurl?

SWALE. I think I will consult a Durham policeman.

OUSE. Hold! I will not be a party to such parleying. I will go so far as to promise to lead you all out of this pernicious place by the sense of smell alone.

SWALE. If it were not for this abominable mist I could recognise my own hills a hundred miles away.

AIRE. I can smell ale, bad ale: so that it is clear we are not yet in civilised parts.

WHARFE. And I can smell a river which I think we should be well advised to put behind us at the earliest possible moment.

SWALE. Ah, that is certainly the Tees which guards our Shire from the barbarians above. There, too, is what is left of the Castle; and, knowing you would all like to inspect

it, I bought a little tup'ny guide-book so as to be able to explain everything to you. Here is the opening burst:

*Barnard Castle! Barney Castle! What memories the very name itself recalls! What stirring deeds! What perilous emprises! What daring assaults! What stout resistances! What flashing of swords! What——*

Ouse (*seizing the book and hurling it over the house-tops*). I am not going to be whatted at like that in a public place. Besides, I have a horror of guide-books which begin on that high note. They give a wholly false idea of History, that is only to be remedied by reading the original documents in their archives.

Wharfe. The only thing that really matters about that Castle is that it surrendered to the Rising in the year 1569.

Aire. If that be the case, why worry about it at all?

Wharfe. Our immediate objective is not the Castle, but the bridgehead. We shall have castles enough to talk about and to spare in our own Shire, let alone the castles we have conquered beyond the borders.

Swale. But the guide-book says that it was recaptured a few days later——

Wharfe. That, alas, is the story of all castles, Swale. They are captured and recaptured until there is nothing left to fight about but a rather gloomy ruin, and on a grey day like this, with the mist hanging over it and the rain threatening to fall, a ruin such as that is certainly on the wrong side of the river to look noble at all. Moreover, if we stop to argue about such things we shall certainly never reach our inn to-night.

Swale. But I make bold to say that my Richmond is a castle apart: a castle blessed above all the castles of the world, and what is even more remarkable, a castle that was never once conquered! And whether we call there or not— I insist upon telling you its story: not, indeed, from a tup'ny guide-book, but out of my own head.

Ouse. I think, Swale, that of the two, I would rather have it from a guide-book; especially from the guide-book of some broad-minded foreigner.

Wharfe. There should be no difficulty about that, for it is a thing for wonder and pride, how many foreigners, finding their own counties barren of such treasures, have sneaked into the Shire and expressed (or attempted to express) their ineffable delight of it in guide-book form.

Aire. They might as well attempt to mix a Yorkshire pudding, or a fat rascal. For, though they have all the ingredients right, they still lack the native knack. And it is the knack that matters.

Swale. For the present I will withhold my story—it will be something for you all to look forward to when you are climbing up my crazy roads. For the moment let us cross this turbid stream by this execrable bridge. It is not, I grant you, the old bridge—so famous in border story—which you can see through the mist on the extreme right.

Ouse. Then I should like to ask you, Swale, why you have led us to this horrible monstrosity which is apparently the private property of a dyeworks? Why cannot we enter our own County by the front door?

Swale. Because at the moment it is held by the Hogs, and because I was determined we should at least enter my Riding sound in every limb.

Wharfe. Be thankful, Ouse, that we have penetrated their lines, and that we now stand on the threshold of our own land. The day, perhaps, is not far distant when this disgusting bridge also will be in the Hogs' possession; and our followers will have to plunge into these malodorous waters and swim for their lives. We at least are spared that: we can enter our Shire upstanding on our two legs. Depend upon it, Swale knew what he was about, or if he did not, St. Cuthbert had us very much in mind.

Let us stand here then for a minute, and give thanks for our safe conduct.

AIRE. I hope we shall not have to stand here long.

OUSE. You should be hardened to it!

WHARFE. As we have started, so we shall have to go on: for though we put ourselves for the present entirely in the hands of Swale, and rely on him to lead us over the oldest of his roads, we shall, I fear, be so harried, that many times we shall have to turn off into shrinking little byways too modest to be marked on the Hogs' maps.

Be that as it may, let us lift up our hearts and give thanks that we are at last on the purlieus of our Shire. Let us step out now reverently for that sacred goal and greet it as beseems such a reunion; and let us inwardly renew——

SWALE (*running to his own soil*). I cannot wait for the end of this interminable speech.

WHARFE (*following*). I will redeem it by a noble peroration in Yorkshire.

. . . . .

II

SWALE. Welcome, comrades and coheirs, to this rarest of Ridings! Welcome to my homelands! Now, indeed, I can take you under my wing and set your feet on the right roads, for not Belinus nor Woden knew them better! And if any of you have any dangerous, inflammable matter in his pockets, let me confiscate it now; especially any tup'ny guide-books or any hoggish map. For I shall not be happy until I know that you are utterly and entirely in my care.

WHARFE. This is not the moment, Swale, for such flippancies. This moment is holy; for it is no little thing to set foot on our native soil again after such a perilous passage. Kings have stooped to kiss ground not half so sacred. Shall we not do the same?

SWALE. Holy as is the moment, sacred as is my soil, I would not have it kissed. All it asks in the way of salute is the firm impress of your heels.

AIRE. If we stand here much longer the Hogs will be all over us, and then we shall be kissing it willy-nilly, and leave not only the impress of our lips and our heels, but most probably the outline of our corpses too.

OUSE. For my part, I have dinted this road with a mark that neither Hog nor oil shall wash away.

WHARFE (*digging his heel deeply into the marl*). So do we all! And now, Swale, lead on to death or to glory—or both!

. . . . .

III

SWALE. I knew it! Lads, I knew it!

ALL. Knew what, Swale?

SWALE. That the moment we entered our own Shire and my incomparable Riding, the mist would rise. Already you can discern the peculiar verdure of my pastures, the swelling beauty of my hills, the singular austereness of my landscapes and the amazing wriggle of my roads! It is at moments such as this that my soul cries out for song, and is it not one of the marks of grace in a Walker that no sooner does his heel strike the note of the road than he longs to sing?

AIRE. Begin then, Swale, at once, for I cannot stand much more of this brag.

SWALE. I was casting about in my mind for the most suitable song for so great an occasion. Were I alone, and in my own dale, I should not be at a loss for a song, or for one of our own audacious ballads: but modesty forbids me to sing exclusively in praise of my own Riding. I would much rather sing a song of the Shire in which we all can join.

OUSE. I may be mistaken, but I think I heard the shrill

blast of a Hog's horn on the main Road before us; that being the case we shall not for long be left unchallenged in possession of this little lane.

SWALE. Were it our fate to be overtaken at this early stage, it would perhaps be fitting to sing that dolorous ballad, beginning:

> They had nae gone a mile: a mile and barely twa,
> When the HOGS up and slew them one an' a'. . . .

WHARFE. I am astonished, Swale, that you should be at a loss for a song at such a moment; and pained that you should wish to purloin the songs of men long ago dead: especially such a funereal song as that:

> Let us make our own songs and sing them as we go!
> Sing them to the rousing tune of heel and toe!

OUSE. Honest songs and yare songs!
AIRE. I object to yare!
OUSE. Breezy songs and bluff songs,
AIRE. Songs in Praise of Aire.

WHARFE. Marching songs and mad songs,
Songs in praise of heels!
OUSE. Striding songs and strong songs
Cursing things on wheels!

AIRE. Juicy songs and just songs,
Songs of Ham and Eggs;
WHARFE. Noble songs and nice songs,
Songs in Praise of Legs!

OUSE. Splashing songs and splosh songs,
SWALE. Songs in Praise of Swale!
AIRE. Mellow songs and mild songs,
Songs in Praise of Ale.

OUSE. Bawling songs and bold songs,
Songs of Beef and Booze;
WHARFE. Straggling songs and straight songs,
OUSE. Songs in Praise of Ouse.

AIRE. Rousing songs and rare songs,
Songs in Praise of Hills,
OUSE. Furious songs and sad songs,
Songs for settling bills.

WHARFE. Hold! This is getting out of hand. We began on a loftier note than this; but it is developing into a mere carouse. Let me lift it back to its original level:

Holy songs and pure songs,
Safe against all scoff;
Wandering songs and wild songs,
Songs in Praise of Wharfe.

. . . . .

OUSE. A shocking rhyme, Wharfe, none the less; and quite enough to rouse the whole school of lynx-eyed, ferret-nosed, mule-eared Prosodists in the innermost recesses of their libraries and bring them pell-mell on to the Road in our track!

WHARFE. Then more power to my lungs, for they would learn more poetry on this rugged Road than they will ever pick up from their Collected Editions.

SWALE. What is a Prosodist?

WHARFE. Ingenuous Swale! Unsullied Swale! Thrice-happy Swale! What (he asks) is a Prosodist? I will tell you, Swale.

There are some who hold that a Prosodist is simply a receiver of stolen property; others, that he is a cheap-jack with a yardstick; but actually he is a Coroner, and a ghoul. That is how he acquires his peculiar knowledge of a poem's anatomy. A man like ourselves: a fine, easy-going, high-souled, boon-hearted fellow, steps along such a road as this, and immediately begins to sing. He sings because he cannot help singing: words and music gush from his throat: his heart dances, and his feet smack out a lively measure. Off goes his song like a wanton butterfly on the wind, yet

scarcely is it out of his cocoon of a throat, than it is pinioned and placed in what is called an Anthology or mortuary. Hardly is it decently deposited there, than the ghoulish Prosodist sneaks in and conducts his examination. First of all he carefully examines its little feet, and in this he is to be excused because the feet of a biped are, or should be, as we all know, his peculiar pride and glory. Oddly enough, however, the song is not a biped but a winged creature, with the tiniest feet imaginable: one whose prime glory is its wings and its colour. That, alas, does not prevent the Prosodist from adjusting his foot-rule and measuring and classifying the song's little feet and toes. The first one he examines may well be what he calls iambic: that is, it has one little toe followed by one big toe. Straightway the Prosodist enters a gleeful little note in his book to that effect, usually in an esoteric hieroglyph, that nobody but himself and a rare few of his board can understand. Gaily his gauge travels to the next foot, and (as the devil will have it) this is very likely spavined (probably because it came in contact with some Hog in its wild career), or it may be that the subtle undulations and rhythms of its flight demanded a rather different kind of foot: one with one big toe and a little toe, or one big toe and two little toes, or one little toe and two big toes, or possibly one little toe, one big toe, and one little toe all in jolly unity one with the other. This, you might think, would charm the Prosodist, but, on the contrary, it maddens him. It upsets his calculations; for what at first sight looked like a true iambic song is now found to be nothing but a rickety, club-footed abortion; and no true song at all, since it violates all the canons of the Coroner's black art. To him, it is a thing more like a centipede than a butterfly; and yet such a centipede as never crawled in any garden. The very names of its malformed feet are enough to scarify any decent-minded man; for the one is found to be iambic, and the next is anapæstic, the third

dactyllic, the fourth spondaic, the fifth amphibrachic, the sixth an outrage never before heard tell of. And that concludes the first part of the examination.

SWALE. What? Do you mean to imply that there is a second part, before that jolly little song or whatnot is finally pronounced immortal?

WHARFE. Such innocence! Such guilelessness! Such simple faith! Most assuredly, Swale, I do. It is true that the song is at once pronounced dead, and, indeed, damned; but before it is condemned to a parish funeral, it is analysed a little more closely. Its atrocious feet are classified as trimeters, tetrameters, pentameters, and even hexameters: all of which are found to be at cross-purposes and loggerheads. It is then examined inchmeal for the poisonous test of rhyme; and it is invariably found to be compounded of false rhyme, foul rhyme, and forced rhyme: each being fatal to immortality. Last of all, it is submitted to the searching test of reason; to pass which it must contain within its frame the germ or kernel of an Uplifting Message, and I am sorry to say that all too many of the songs that have satisfactorily passed the foot-examination, and even the rhyme-examination, fail utterly at the reason-examination. It is not so much their entire lack of Reason as their superabundance of Unreason that condemns them. It is as if the unfortunate poets responsible for them are quite incapable of seeing life steadily and reasonably, but must go about on their heads seeing everything upside-down. In a hoggish age, such as the present, there is no doubt some excuse for them, for they can hardly venture on the broad highway without being tossed as with a herd of rampaging bulls. Nevertheless, the Prosodists cannot be expected to make allowances for that; for they are all of them, to a man, Hogs themselves.

SWALE. Am I then to understand, Wharfe, that no perfect songs are written, but that all are doomed to this pitiful perdition?

WHARFE. Only the modern songs are born with this blight upon them. The old songs, the songs of the great Masters: these are (every one of them) still sound in every limb, still oozing reason from every pore, still kicking and perfect in every foot. It is, indeed, only by taking the measurements and dimensions of these immortals that the imperfections of the moderns can be diagnosed. It is only by truncating some such song limb from limb, and using it as a foot-rule, that the deformities and enormities of the modern mongrels can be made plain. Take, for example, that noble stanza of Wordsworth:

> And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales
> Among the rocks and winding *scars*:
> Where deep and low the Hamlets lie
> Beneath their little patch of sky
> And little lot of stars.

How often has not that been used to measure the feet and legs of other trudgers in those Elysian Fields! But it is, of course, only once or twice in a generation that a Bard arises who can calculate his strides to such a nicety as that, and shape his songs accordingly.

OUSE. What nonsense is this, Wharfe! I, for one, will show you how to trudge and how to sing too; for, while you have been stuffing our guileless Swale with that preposterous flapdoodle, Aire and myself have been putting our heads and feet together and making such a song as was never yet mangled by any Prosodist; a fine sturdy limb of a song that would kick his foot-rule sky-high and paralyse him with its roaring.

WHARFE. What is the nature of this obstreperous song, Ouse?

OUSE. It is of the nature of Yorkshire pudding, compounded of the batter of Truth and Reason alone. In short, it is the "Song of the Yorkshireman"; and it wants but two more verses and a chorus to bring it to a well-browned, crisp,

delectable perfection. And you, Wharfe, shall make the chorus which shall be like the gravy: while Swale supplies the missing stanzas.

SWALE (*covered with confusion*). How proud I should be to have a share in it! and how miserable I am to have to refuse!

AIRE. I have suspected him all along of hoggish tendencies; and now I know the truth, I will——

SWALE (*on his toes*). It is true that I cannot sing, but I can fight, Aire, make no mistake about that; and by St. Francis and his Friars, I shall most certainly knock you down.

WHARFE. Hold! I have said it before, and I say it again, there must be no fighting among ourselves; and no knocking down unless it be of an interloping Hog. As for St. Francis and his tramping Friars, I have never yet read, Swale, that they went about the dales knocking honest Yorkshiremen down, but that, on the contrary, they behaved with the gravity, grace and courtesy of true gentlemen.

AIRE. Hold my coat, Ouse——

OUSE. Not for a King's ransom——

WHARFE. I will admit, Aire, that you had some little provocation, and I cannot for the life of me understand why our genial Swale, who has so charmed us all with his artlessness and cordiality, and is (we hope) shortly going to show us his own adorable banks and braes, not to speak of inns, should have refused to add a stanza or two to this most excellent song for which it is my privilege to provide the gravy. All the same, Aire, it does not justify you in hurling that hoggish accusation at his innocent head and legs.

SWALE. When I am leading you all over the Pass of Buttertubs, and when the sweat is oozing from Aire's overheated and underfed body, I will have my revenge. For the moment I will wait. But to clear my name and fame with Wharfe and Ouse, I will tell you why I cannot help to complete your song. The fact is—and I am the more mortified to confess it—I cannot sing!

ALL. Cannot sing? Cannot sing?? Cannot sing??? A Walker and cannot sing!

WHARFE. There is a pathetic story of a nightingale with a broken wing: and yet it could sing: but I protest I never yet heard of a Walker, broken or no, who could not sing. Troubadours, jongleurs, minstrels, scalds. . . . What were all these but Walkers and Singers? The terms are synonymous, Swale.

OUSE. Is it that you were born with some terrible impediment that prevents you from singing the words that spring to your mouth? And yet you can talk on occasion. . . .

SWALE. The truth is, that ever since I left my own dale at the Call—and for the first time in my life—my heart has been in my boots, and not until I hear my singing river again will the spell be broken.

WHARFE. For myself, I have only to brush the boundary-stone to burst out like a throstle.

SWALE. Better still: burst out like a bagpipes with this much-vaunted song that you have all put together.

IV

OUSE. Let me first of all make clear to Wharfe and to Swale how this song came to be composed, otherwise Wharfe will ruin it with a saltless gravy. And I am the more disposed to do so, since I am convinced this is a point on which we can all unreservedly agree. In a word, it concerns our Origins.

WHARFE. I hope, Ouse, we are all agreed on that.

OUSE. Undoubtedly! But the sceptical world still chooses to wrangle and squabble about them. Only last week a man (I mention no names, lest you should all fly into a passion) published a new Outline of our Uprising, or, as he put it, Descent. I am not going to insult you by divulging the horrible crawling thing he gave as our first parent. I am not going to burthen you with his interminable story of our gradual evolution (I think that is the word) from an extremely

hideous and almost indecent species of shellback, jelly-fish, or reptile, to a thing on very inferior trotters; nor from a crawling posture (or imposture) into a crooked, hunch-backed Monster with a swishing tail; nor from that to a Tribal Horror, whose jaw-bone (picked up in a swamp) is sufficiently formidable to frighten even an industrious seeker after knowledge like myself; nor from that to a hairy old man a little higher than an Ape, and considerably lower than the more agile monkeys.

Much less am I going to weary you with his German Authorities. Least of all would I attempt to impose on you your Family Trees and Genealogies. For one thing, we all know our own trees well enough, and, as for genealogies, I would like to take you some day to the incredibly ancient Parish Church of Beverley, where you will find the names of all my forelders very neatly set down in the successive registers.

WHARFE. And my own in Hubberholme!

AIRE. And mine in Kildwick Langkirk!

SWALE. And mine in Grinton! And for that matter, I have the caul of my great-, great-, great-, great-, great-, great-grandfather still.

OUSE. I will not say we can all of us trace our track as far back as Adam, though our Bible is full of such noble families. But we, alas, have to face the lamentable fact of the great fires that burnt in the middle of the sixteenth century when an occasional Register came in very handy to melt the gold down.

WHARFE. I have always understood, Ouse, that Parish Registers were not kept until the year 1538——

OUSE. Were not *ordered* to be kept, perhaps, but that is another matter. Luckily for me, however, Old Brother Moone was able to dig up the only missing links needed to prove my own progenitors, and I am happy to tell you all that with the unfortunate exception of one Grandfather

born about the year nine hundred and forty-six, I am able to put my finger on every man Jack of them back to old Adam himself.

WHARFE. Tut, tut, we do not question it a moment. *Our* origins are happily beyond a peradventure: though it is interesting to learn from these candid modern histories and autobiographies exactly who (or what) was responsible for some of the Hogs at present usurping the dress and the rights of Man. That, however, is only by the way. What infuriates me is that they should have the impudence to impose their ancestors on *us*!

AIRE. I should be the last man in the world to deny their descent or ascent from an Orang-Utang, or a Lemur—— All I ask is that they should lemme alone; all we demand is that they should stick to their own trees, for it will not be very long before they all strangle themselves in the higher branches. Speed the day!

SWALE. Well then, while they are about it, let us have the song for the love of Mathusala, Melchisedec, and all the holy centenarians who have gone before us!

OUSE. Patience, Swale, and you shall hear it; but the ground is not yet clear, and the gravy (to judge from the wry expression on Wharfe's face) not yet properly seasoned. For you, Swale, in your pristine innocence, do not yet understand the distortions and the abortions of the Historians who have told the tale. It will, I know, be news to you, that not only do these Hogs defile the purity of our origins, but also actually avow that we have been—I hardly dare breathe the ugly word—conquered!

SWALE. I can never believe that they would say that of any one of us, or of any man in the three Ridings.

OUSE. Not only do they say it, tender Swale, but they actually fabricate fabulous books about it; or rather about *them*. For not content with dogmatically asserting that we were conquered once, they persist in declaring that we were

conquered over and over again; that we were overrun, massacred, wiped out; wiped out again; subjugated, alienated, ostracised, civilised, paganised, and paralysed; that we allowed a pack of Barbarians to bash in our skulls: a brigade of Romans to teach *us* how to build, thatch and fight (God forbid): a boatload of scavengers to murder us all in our beds and plant themselves on our farms: a swaggering horde of Frenchies to corrupt our very noble speech: and what is worst of all—a rabble of gaumless Lancastrians to sneak from their ginnels and clout us on the jaw!

SWALE. That is the most terrible string of lies I have ever listened to in silence. May you be forgiven for so much as repeating them, Ouse, for you have certainly broken the eighth commandment!

WHARFE. I am all impatience, Aire, to hear this song: for I shall not be happy until the taste of Ouse's speech is out of my mouth. And I have brewed such a gravy as shall make even Swale feel assoiled!

### THE SONG OF THE YORKSHIREMAN

AIRE (*loudly*).

The Romans marched from over the seas
To tread the Yorkshire dales:
They begged us on their bended knees
To teach them how to make such cheese
And how to brew such ales!
We stuffed them with our gammon hams,
Then drove them in cartloads—
To see our stallions, heifers, lambs,
And warned them how we hated shams,
Then set them digging roads!

WHARFE (*without a moment's hesitation*).

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane?
Am I a Saxon: am I a Celt?
Am I a Norseman: am I a Thane?
Am I a Percy—minus a belt?

Am I a True-Blue Englishman?
By your leave—if you please,
I am better than these:
For I am a Home-Fed Yorkshireman!

OUSE.

The Picts and the Scots sneak'd over the Tees
Dragging their clubs behind them;
They found us sitting at our ease
And singing jolly Yorkshire glees:
We didn't even mind them.
But when their henchmen bade us drink
The poison of their native stills:
We tipped our yokels all the wink
To thwack them till they could not think—
Then chased them to their hills.

ALL (*together*).

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane? etc.

AIRE.

The Danes came pillaging our dales
And said they'd come to stay!
We soused them thoroughly with ales
And stuffed some with our tallest tales,
And othersome with hay!
But when we saw the state of things,
By everything that's holy!
We pawsed those interloping kings
Right back to their own odious springs
Like lumps of roly-poly.

ALL.

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane? etc.

OUSE.

The Normans out of Normandy came
Galloping thro' the Shire;
They bragg'd they'd only come to claim
The glory of an immortal fame
By rolling us in the mire!

We thanked them kindly for their pains
Then thumped their crookèd noses:
We seized their chargers by the manes
And let them taste our muddy lanes,
As History discloses.

ALL.

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane? etc.

WHARFE.

The Lancashire Loons crept over the border
One Saturday afternoon:
They said they stood for Law and Order
And hated Anarchy and Murder,
So could they have the crown!
We led them to a windy moor
To take a breath of air—
Then promptly fell'd them by the score
And promis'd them a fistful more
If they should ever dare!

ALL.

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane? etc.

OUSE.

The horrible Anthropologists came
With a grinning Chimpanzee:
They said it would be a disgusting shame
Not to welcome Uncle, who was quite tame,
And beg him stay to tea!
We tied them all to a common string
And strung them to a Tree,
Then asked them would they kindly ring
If they found they were short of anything
To prove our Ancestry.

ALL.

Am I a Roman: am I a Dane? etc.

AIRE.

And, last of all, came the Learnèd Men
  Nursing a Broken Jaw:
They were not quite clear, they said, just then,
Just who or what or where or when
  Had pinched our Parents' paw:
But of this, they declared, they were perfectly sure,
Ten million years ago (or more)
They crawled about the Sussex shore.

WHARFE.

Am I a Monkey: am I an Ape?
  Am I a Lemur or a Baboon?
Will you measure my toes with a tape
  In case I am sprung from the boon
*Palæoanthropus Heidelbergensis*
Or *Homo Neanderthalensis*? . . .

SWALE (*aghast*).

Neither is mentioned in Genesis!
Before I take leave of my senses
  Will you measure me soon?

OUSE. Capital, jocund little Swale! I wager we shall yet hear you sing a whole song of your own brewing.

v

AIRE. Talking of brewing, I should uncommonly like to taste a tankard of Swale's ale to wash the nasty taste of those crawling things out of my throat.

SWALE. I hope, Aire, you are not tiring already, for I would warn you we are now on the very brink of Watling Street, and you will need all your toes, especially your big toe which Wharfe tells me is the true distinguishing mark between the Walker and a Hog, to keep pace with my strides.

AIRE. Let us halt right here and take off our shoes and stockings, for I am determined to prove once and for all the indisputable nature of my pedigree——

OUSE. Nobody, Aire, would suspect you of a Gorilla for a grandfather: an Antelope perhaps——

AIRE. Wait until I unfasten my shovven-strings——

WHARFE. I should very strongly advise you, Aire, to keep your shoes and stockings on, not because I doubt for a moment the size or suppleness of your big toe; not because I suspect for a moment that you are troubled with a blister; not because I imagine for a moment that your shoes are beginning to pinch; but simply because the true proof of a Walker is in his walking; and it behoves us all to convince Swale by the measure of our marching that we are all equally of the blood royal. Time enough to test our shoes, ankles, calves and thighs when we are about to plunge into Swale's impetuous waters for our first bathe. The great thing now is to step out—and here we are at the cross-roads, where Swale perhaps will point the path?

VI

OUSE. That will not be necessary, Swale. For here I see, as elsewhere in our County, the Hogs have been busy numbering and lettering our once nameless roads and reducing the romance of the cross-roads to a matter of simple arithmetic. This great road, running due east and west, is, I see, number B34, and that is all the Hog wants to know when he is rushing along it.

SWALE. I tell you that this is a bifurcation of Watling Street itself, connecting Bowes or Lavatrae with Brough or Vertera, and thence to Brovoncae and the junction of Maiden Way up to the Wall.

WHARFE. Nevertheless, Swale, Ouse is right. For whatever it was before, it is clearly B34 now, and there is B67 beyond it and, beyond that——

AIRE. Damnation.

WHARFE. Or number A6073, which is, I take it, the same thing. For it is significant how this craze of numbers distinguishes the Hog from an honest man. The poetry of

place-names is nothing to him. What does he care if Greta Bridge lies before him and Brignall Banks below? Plaster the sign-post with a monstrous number alone and he would be all the better pleased, for he could then accelerate instead of slowing down. Numbers are meat and drink to him. He is himself only known to the Police by his number, and how proudly he flaunts it before and behind! The roads, to him, are a succession of numbers and unless we rise in our might he will daub the map of England with a monstrous array of numbers in place of the old names of the villages and towns.

So York will become Y4735: and Aldborough A536762: and London L666666.

SWALE. Where or what is London? I do not recollect a hamlet of that name in all the Shire.

VII

WHARFE. Pure and Holy Swale! Unspotted Swale! Incorruptible Swale! Swale true to the kindred points of heaven and home! Swale nurtured among the lonely places! Swale of the mountain and the moor! Swale of the kestrel and curlew! Swirling Swale! Translucent Swale! Bubbling Swale! Serenely ignorant and disturbing Swale! Where or what (he asks) is London?

I will tell you, Swale; for it was once my misfortune to be captured by the Pressgang there. It is, first and foremost, a hoggish place, governed entirely by Hog Law. It is, indeed, the Mecca of all the Hogs in the World. There you will see all day and all night the hideous procession of the more revolting Hogs rushing to and fro. There you will hear the heaven-rending roaring of the Horn as the Hogs swish to and from their sties. A savage place! An evil place; a noisy place; a fatal place to the Two-Leggèd, who have not yet suffered the martyrdom of the wheel; an oily place, full of nasty smells and gases; a wicked place, full of snares and

decoys; a pestilential place on the direct road to the Inferno.

AIRE. And yet haply not quite beyond hope of redemption, for I have heard say that clapped in the middle of it is a kind of sanctuary or Club, stoutly palisaded and shut off from the corruption around; a place where such of our Lads as have been compelled to quit the County foregather and conspire to keep the memory of it green, and do what they can to save that Sink of Hoggery and Iniquity from eternal damnation; a place where proper food and drink is meted out to the needy, and where the secret of making true Yorkshire Pudding is guarded with the most heroic zeal; a place, in a word, which is the resort and refuge of a select and unspotted band bearing the proud and honoured title of the Society of Yorkshiremen!

WHARFE. You are right, Aire; and it may be that it will yet grow strong and powerful enough to sweep the great Sty clean. But even so, it was not of Pudding but rather of Hog number-posts we were talking, and I want to ask:

Am I no longer to be free to roam
At random from my home;
And walk along my native roads
Anywhere the fancy goads;
With not an inkling where my feet have strayed
And small desire to seek external aid?

Shall I no longer be compelled to climb
As I have climbed in freer time,
A crazy sign-post at some cross-road ends
When the coy moon no flickering lanthorn lends—
And, match in hand, gaze on the rustic screed
To learn the whither all the wild roads lead?
But be no wiser after all my pains
Because the sign is bleared by weather-stains!

Is all my England to be daubed by dumb
Odd-numbered sign-boards, graven rule o' thumb?

Upstanding for the use of motor-damnèd souls,
Erect and Prim like brazen barbers' poles!
Is all my England to be loudly lettered
And Freedom bound and gagged and fettered?

Am I no longer to be free to ramble
To *Nowhere* on an endless ramble;
And may I never more a refuge claim
At that thrice-blessèd place that *bears* no name?

VIII

SWALE. If you do not step out at once, Wharfe, without any more singing and questioning, you will certainly sleep to-night at some such place; for dusk will see you landed midway over the Stang on Booze Moor——

WHARFE. I ask no better refuge.

SWALE. But for my part, I have set my heart on sleeping this night by my own river on a bed of ling. And by that token, here is the way that leads to the Stang Inn, and once we are past it, and have staggered over the Stang itself, we shall push on to Arkengarthdale, and skirting the village of Booze, rush forward——

AIRE. Hold! What is all this pushing and rushing, and what is all this nonsense about passing inns and skirting a place with such a noble name as Booze?

OUSE. You are right, Aire, at last you are right. And I for one swear by all the tankards, quart pots and jorums in the Shire I shall not pass this first lonely inn nor set foot in Swaledale without first boozing at this place called Booze.

SWALE. Nothing, Lads, was farther from my mind than to pass any of the scattered inns on our line of march; above all, not the very first inn midway over the Stang where I intend to introduce you all to the true Humming Northern Ale, so famous in our story. But as for the higgledy-piggledy hamlet of Booze, which stands high up on the hillside facing Calver Hill, ready to bombard all intruders with hidden

cannon, I am bound to warn you it is the teetotalest corner of the whole Shire since it does not boast either an ale-house or an ale-barrel.

WHARFE. Is this possible, Swale?

SWALE. But I have heard say that the rain is so nappy there, they catch it in barrels and get far more drunk on a pint of it than it is possible to get on a whole hogshead of southern swipes.

AIRE. That does not excuse Booze for not boasting an inn——

OUSE. Inn or no inn, I insist on visiting this incredible place to test those strong waters for myself.

IX

SWALE. Was ever mortal man in such a quandary? for here is an arm of Watling Street, and but a few miles east of us lies the Great North Road. How I should love to lead you over that noble highway and show you the glories of Richmond, Catterick, Aldborough, Northallerton, and a hundred places more; how I ache to march with you like our fathers of old down that great middle track of England!

WHARFE. That would be madness, Swale, for that road is at present entirely under the wheels of the Hogs, and how can we hope to wrest it from them? We are four against at least four hundred thousand: and were we to venture on it without strong support, we should most certainly be smashed to smithereens.

SWALE. It is written: Five of yours shall pursue a hundred others, and a hundred of you ten thousand.

WHARFE. Not a doubt of it, Swale, but we must first gather together our hundred. Meanwhile, our way is fixed —over the crest of the mountains by the still older tracks that no Hog knows. Once we have won our way through the dales we shall have accomplished our immediate task

and the great Rising will follow; and Watling Street, that once rang with the thunder of the Legions and the rumble of our wains, will yet ring again with the tread of many feet.

SWALE. Then follow me down this byway—and good-bye to Watling Street!

X

WHARFE. And, after all, we, for a certainty, are not the first who have had to rush away from this neighbourhood or be trampled to death by a rampaging Hog. Unless I am deceived, it was from this very spot that Friar Myddleton, with Peter of Dale and Bryan of Beare, fled hotfoot before the Felon Sowe.

SWALE. You are right, Wharfe; and I agree with you that this Sowe which they called (and rightly) "a Fiende in lykeness of a Swyne," was none other than the Archetype of all the HOGS to come. For you will remember that they found it "liggin under a tree rugg'd and rustic" (as so many modern Hogs lig), and the moment they drew nigh, it started its roaring and beldering and prepared to slay them all three; and how, in the end, more dead than alive,

> They fledd away by Watling Strete,
> They had no succour but their feet,
> It was the maire pitye. . . .

WHARFE. And how, though Peter of Dale made the Sign of the Cross and read over it St. John hys gospell, it took no more notice than to rive all the clothes from his back and half murder him on the spot.

SWALE. Even so, they mastered it at last with the help of Gilbert Griffin, so let us take heart of grace as we turn our backs on the Street and stride for the Stang.

AIRE. I should like to know, Swale, how this Street came to get its curious name.

SWALE. I will tell you, Aire. At least, I will tell you the legend of it, which is far more likely to be true than the versions of your Historians; for their theory is that every decent road in the land is a Roman road. There are even fanatics who maintain that our famous Wade's Causeway, that cuts through Ryedale like a carving-knife, is likewise a Roman road, though it has been common knowledge in those parts for centuries that the Causeway was built by a great lad of ours of the name of Wade, the greatest road-builder we ever bred, for the sole benefit of his wife, who one day complained to him that when she went to call in the cows for the milking—she had four thousand of them, and they were so independent that they demanded a clear fifty yards' chewing room one between t'other—she got all mucked up, the paths were *that* bad. Whereupon Wade, like a proper lad, set about building his great Causeway to keep her dry as she waddled forth. And his wife—like the good lass she was—hugged all the stones in her great pinafore and watched and wheezed while he worked like a lion. But one day the strings broke with the weight of them, and all the stones clattered out in a heap where you see them to this day. For Wade said he'd be damned if he'd pick one up; and though he didn't mind being bossed and bullied he'd be shot if he'd do his own navvying. . . .

And that was that.

AIRE. Why, what has this got to do with Watling Street?

SWALE. Nothing.

AIRE. Then why relate it?

SWALE. To confound your Historians, though, as to this noble Watling Street of ours, I will allow the Romans had a hand in it, under our expert guidance. In short, when they were last in these parts doing odd jobs for our great forelders, they were struck by the frequency of a phrase always on our hospitable Lads' lips; I mean the words: "What'll thoo 'ev to soop, lad?"

Somebody was always "wattling" (as they called it), so that in the course of time they began to refer to this ancient track that they were restoring and repaving—in return for their board and lodgings—as "Wattling Strete," just as they referred to the boon-hearted Lads about them as "Wattlers." Not being skilled in the spelling of our ancient folk-speech, they had to make the best fist of it they could, and when they wrote home to their mothers and fathers, they gave their address for example as:

Julius Cæsar
Jon o' Dick o' Bob o' Mat o' Ned's Farm
WATLINGSTRETE
Swal Dal
YORKSHIRE. Britn.

And so it came to be known.

Wharfe. And so you will find it in my copy of the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti.*

Ouse. Would that all legends were so transparently true, Swale!

Aire. And would that the hospitable practice of whattling had not apparently gone so completely out of fashion!

Ouse. At least we are on the way to booze—
Aire. To booze—and a barrel of rain!
Ouse. I'd rather drink a pint of Ouse.
Aire. I'd much prefer henbane.

Swale. Down there below us is the river Greta!
Ouse. Pleased to meet her: pleased to meet her!
Swale. How brown: how turgid are her waters!
Aire. How alcoholic are her daughters!

Wharfe. I fear, Swale, that not until you have proved to these headstrong Lads that you can brew ale as brown as your lovely rivers, will you have any peace of mind. And,

in a way, I think they are to be excused, for there is nothing so exasperating to a Walker as to be deprived of a reasonable quantity of drink. Ale is to him what oil is to a Hog: it keeps him going. But more than that, it sobers him. Without it he is apt to lose control of him and break out into bad verse, like Ouse and Aire, and rush on wildly and thirstily regardless of the scenery around him. So I say, for the sake of sobriety, show us the way to an inn and see to it on your peril that it be open, or I dare not contemplate the consequences!

SWALE. There will certainly be ale for the asking!

WHARFE. Bacchus could not expect more.

AIRE. What is the name of this invisible inn?

OUSE. And how many miles away?

SWALE. It is called the Stang Inn or the Inn of Hope, and it is no more than three miles ahead and no less than twelve hundred feet above the level of the sea; certainly well below Jinglepot hole, and over five hundred feet below that noble inn of mine at Tan Hill, which is the highest in all England—and a fig for the Cat and Fiddle! While we are climbing stiffly to it, I will tell you the story of Egglestone Abbey, Rokeby and Mortham Tower, and instruct you in the folklore of this historic corner of my dale.

AIRE. May all the Hobs, Boggarts, Witches, Hags o' the Broom, Barguests and Gabble-ratchets seize and away with you!

WHARFE. Hold! We cannot afford to incur the wrath of our Hobmen, much less of our Boggarts and Witches. As for the fearful Barguest and the still more dreadful Gabble-ratchet, I think, Aire, you had better make the sign of the Cross forthwith.

AIRE (*crossing himself thrice*). On my soul, I would not offend one of them for a hogshead: I mean a pure and holy hogshead of the best. But I protest when I ask for ale, I am not going to be fobbed off with an Abbey, a Castle, a Border

Peel and a mouthful of thirsty folklore, while I stagger up this tipsy road.

OUSE. Again, Aire, you are right, and I am with you. How can a man swallow Swale's tall talk without first draining a tankard? Give us ale and we will swallow anything——

SWALE. I have promised you ale at the Inn of Hope. What more can man do?

WHARFE. The next best thing to drinking ale is to talk about ale, honest Swale.

SWALE. Well, then, though I am sorry to take such a scurvy leave of my lovely Greta and of all these historic remains before I have fairly whetted your appetite——

AIRE. Or whistles——

XI

SWALE. . . . Nevertheless, to pacify Aire and to propitiate the Hob of Jinglehole, who might be minded to turn all the ale in the inn sour to spite him, I will make a vow to talk about nothing but ale for the next three miles, and raise such a thirst in you that you will all be too parched to protest. Moreover, I will step out so blithely over the Stang that you will either fall out and own yourselves unworthy to tread my stiff tracks and drink my strong stingo, or else follow me and confess—as did Bacchus when he was last in these parts—that our ale is, beyond compare, the stiffest, nappiest nectar in all the world. That being so, it is only right and proper that you should first of all purify your lungs, clarify your senses, purge your imaginations, fortify your feet and legs by this initiatory climb, otherwise you will not be in the requisite state of innocence for swallowing this frothy Humming Stuff of ours. In short, it will make you drunk as it made Bacchus drunk when he first sampled it, and that, I am sure, would be a disgusting sight.

AIRE (*panting*). Bacchus, I have always understood, was a wine-bibber or nothing.

SWALE. I hope, Aire, you will not squander your breath in vain questioning, for though this road is rough, it is smooth and oily as a hoggish road compared with the track ahead!

WHARFE. I protest, Swale, I do not like this brag of yours. Be assured you have no monopoly of rough roads; and for a punishment I shall lead you a dance up and down my own dale that will sober you sooner than at present seems possible. For we, too, have stupendous roads and hills and fells and scars, and we, too, have inns, such as the George, the Craven Arms, the Moorcock, the Anglers' Arms, the Timble Inn, the Dyneley Arms, the Chevin, the Grouse, the Royal Oak, the Red Lion, the Blue Lion, the White Lion, the Black Lion, the Three Legs, the Clap Yat, the Fleece, the Old Falcon, the (55) White Swans, the (99) White Harts, the Coach and Horses, the Boot and Shoe, the Pigeon Pie——

AIRE. Not to mention the Cock and Bottle, the Hole in t'Wall, the Black Horse, the Bay Horse, the Grey Horse, the Angel, the Green Dragon, the Barley Mow, the Quiet Woman, the Nag's Head, the Rose and Crown, the Star and Garter, the Naked Man, the Smiling Mule, the Naked Woman, the Old Raggalds, the Withens, the Herders, the Buck, the Three Nuns, the Jug and Bottle, the Mucky Duck, the Chinese Temple, and a thousand more.

OUSE. And none of them worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as the Old White Harte, let alone the Four Alls, the Sloop, the Valiant Soldier, the Malt Shovel, the King's Head, the Black Swan, the Triton, the Cock and Lion, the Coverley Arms, the Black Bull, the Queens, the Cod and Lobster, the Old White Star, the Windmill, the Barefoot, the Wolds Inn, the Seven Stars——

XII

SWALE. Even so, not one of them is to be compared with the inn aforementioned, which Bacchus honoured with his presence and that of his crew.

AIRE. I am in no mood for any more of your cock-and-bull stories, and I warn you, Swale, that unless you can produce me some more authentic authority than your own imagination for this fantastic fable, I will not swallow it. Why, only last week a certain Brewer in a great city of mine carried off the First Prize in all England for the excellence of his beer.

SWALE. I am sorry, Aire, that you should be so pig-headed, and for two pins I should refuse to truckle to you were it not that my honour and—what is far more important—the honour of my Riding is at stake! In short, I can only say that this triple carouse of Bacchus, first at Northallerton, then at Easingwold, and lastly at York, has been the common talk of the dale ever since I came to the age of reason.

WHARFE. As I am happy to bear witness, Swale, though there is, perhaps, some excuse for Aire's ignorance of this epoch-making visit, since the written records relating to it are guarded with such jealous care by the few librarians who have copies of the depositions.

SWALE. I am amazed to hear it, for I should have thought they would have bound them in cloth of gold and exhibited them for the envy and admiration of all-comers.

WHARFE. You may go into such a library and ask for a copy of Genesis, the Domesday Survey, the First Folio or some equally valuable work, and it will be handed to you with no fuss at all so long as you sign your name and quote a decimal number—for they are all for decimal numbers in these days; but Bacchus in Northallerton is another

matter. Very few librarians inside the County have heard of this Pubcrawl of Bacchus; very few librarians outside the County have heard of Northallerton. Howbeit, there is a library where a concise account of this ale-bout of his is kept . . . not on a common shelf, indeed, for any horrified Prohibitionist to seize and confiscate; but locked up in an iron casket and guarded in an inner room. And what is even more remarkable, I have a copy of it in my own pocket.

OUSE. And what is the name of this precious parchment?

WHARFE. It is called, quite simply and modestly: *The Praise of Yorkshire Ale.* And it was printed (the better to preserve it) at the Signe of the Bible in Stone Gate, York itself, by that ever-to-be-remembered master printer of ours, J. White. It bears, therefore, on the face of it, the Hallmark of Truth (though not, alas, of Infallibility).

OUSE. No reasonable man could doubt it. I am only impatient to hear the name of the praiseworthy fellow who penned this record for the benefit of posterity.

WHARFE. One thing is certain, Ouse—he was a Yorkshireman. But, like all Yorkshiremen, he was of a modest, retiring disposition, hating the plaudits of the common multitude, to avoid which he affixed merely his initials to this immortal Bacchanalian writing; namely, *G. M.*, adding, succinctly, the syllable "Gent.," to which he was unquestionably entitled; for come to that, are not all men of the County, Gents.?

What those other tantalising initials signify, however, is one of the riddles of the Universe, though a certain obscurity is a sure mark of genius. Some will have it that he was called Giles Morrington, others George Mornington; a third school fastens fiercely on one George Meriton, and a fourth on George Merington, while one Critic argues that Francis Bacon——

XIII

SWALE. What, might I ask, is a Critic?

OUSE. A beast of prey, indeed!

SWALE. How so?

OUSE. A strange bird of the vulture tribe, so I am told, though I thank my stars I never set eyes on one and have only hearsay to guide me.

WHARFE. You are certainly misinformed, Ouse: for I have met the species in the flesh in the course of my travels.

SWALE. Then tell us, Wharfe, what it is like, so that we too may know what to avoid.

WHARFE. You must certainly do that on your peril, or I gravely fear for your lives! And yet to run when he approaches will avail you nothing, for he is quicker than thought. Outwardly, he has the form and semblance of a man like ourselves, though lower: much lower. That is to say, he has a sort of legs and a kind of arms; and, above all, pronounced Club-feet. But the strangest part of his anatomy is his eyes, for these are stuck in the back of his fat head, so that when you think he is making advances, he is meditating a cunning attack behind your back. As for his food, I have heard say that he lives entirely on a diet of new books and old bones, which he rives to pieces with a most frightful fury and then promptly spews up in an entirely new form. . . . A dreadful beast, indeed, and smacks his lips over dead men's bones and swears there's nothing else like 'em! God help us all.

SWALE. I am happy to think such monsters are unknown in Swaledale.

XIV

AIRE. Pest on all schools and arguñers! What has this got to do with Bacchus anyway?

SWALE. I will tell you, Aire, without a moment's quib-

bling; for I have the very words of this noble writing branded on my memory. Let Wharfe correct me if I mangle a single syllable.

WHARFE. I hope, Swale, you are not going to recite the entire rigmarole; for that, if I remember rightly, numbers no fewer than four hundred and ninety-four lines, not including the jolly Catch in the middle which is sung to the tune of the "Myrtle Shades." And remember, Swale, that they are not all, strictly speaking, edifying lines, sober lines, or even sparkling lines; but that some are compounded of the drugs of that vile wine on which Bacchus once set so much store.

SWALE. Nevertheless, I would have Aire hear them all, if only to teach him with what reverence and restraint he should approach this ale of ours lest he too, like Bacchus and his Pards, be bowled over. Besides, have I not sworn an oath to talk of ale until we reach that Inn of Hope which I see far away up the Stang before us?

WHARFE. Begin then, but depend upon it, I shall stop you when I smell the wine.

SWALE. I make only one condition: namely, that Aire keeps his mouth shut, and does not grunt so offensively as he toils along. Otherwise I shall assuredly step out faster and leave him behind to work out his salvation alone.

AIRE. By——

OUSE. Whisht! Them 'at cracks o' thersen awlus to'n oot blown eggs!

WHARFE. Silence all!

XV

SWALE.

Bacchus having call'd a Parliament of late
For to consult about some Things of State,
Nearly concerning the honour of his Court,
To th' Sun, behind tn' Exchange, they did resort:
Where being met——

XVI

AIRE. A moment, Swale! I do not like this easy-going way of beginning a story. It takes too much for granted. You should begin after the manner of the bards, and take a Preliminary Ramble before you start.

Where, we want to know, *was* Bacchus when he called this Parliament, and to which Sun and behind which Exchange did he resort? Was it the Corn Exchange in Leeds, or the Wool Exchange, Bradford, or was it——

SWALE. I have finished, Aire. You have broken the pitcher, or ever it reached the well.

AIRE. I will grant you there is a Sun Inn shining in more than one of my great cities, but it is not behind the Exchange.

SWALE. And there is a Sun Inn in Northallerton to this day: and has been time out of mind, as is proved by an epitaph in the churchyard:

> Hic jacet Walter Gunn
> Sometime landlord of the "Sun."
> Sic transit gloria Mundi!
> He drank hard upon Friday,
> That being a high day.
> Then took to his bed and died on Sunday.

WHARFE. What does it matter where Bacchus was when he felt the Call? Surely there is something ingenuous about this direct method of beginning the tale. There is no grandiloquent Preface to bolster up this Excursion.

As like as not, it is that smiling Sun Inn of mine, "built by James Thackray and Rose his wife," that dominates my lovely Washburn and stands beyond Nor'ood Edge, hard by John o' Gaunt's Castle, near the Junction of Penny Pot Lane.

But even supposing that Bacchus had the ill-hap to convene his Court at the Sun behind th' Exchange that old Pepys

frequented—what more natural than that he should immediately have felt the need of a purer, ampler air?—and so hasted up to Yorkshire.

AIRE. What the devil does it matter anyway?

OUSE. I am convinced it was either at York or Beverley, for the ale there is unquestionably the finest in all the Shire.

XVII

SWALE. I will prove to you, in a moment, that wherever Bacchus was when he was called to the Bar, he adjourned immediately to Northallerton, which is notoriously the dream and goal of all the ale-drinkers in the world. In short:

To th' Sun, behind th' Exchange, they did resort:
Where being met, and many things that time
Concerning the Adulterating Wine
And other Liquors; Selling of Ale in Muggs,
Silver Tankerds, Black-Potts, and little Juggs:
Strong Beer in Rabits, and cheating penny Cans,
Three Pipes for twopence, and such like Trepans:
Vintners small Bottles, Silver mouth'd black Jacks,
Papers of Sugar, with such like cheating knacks:
Biskets, *Luke Olives*, *Anchoves*, *Caveare*,
*Neats Tongues*, *West-Phalia-Hambs*, and such like Chear,
*Crabs*, *Lobsters*, *Collar Beefe*, *Cold Pullets*, *Oysters*,
And such like Stuffe, which makes Young-men turn Roysters;
And many other things were then debated,
And Bills past upon the Cases stated;
And all things ready for Adjournment, then
Stood up one of the Northern Riding men,
A *Boon good Fellow*, and a Lover of Strong Ale.

WHARFE. "Northern Country" not "Riding," according to the manuscript.

SWALE. I protest it should be "Riding," for he was one of my own forelders——

AIRE. "West Riding," I think, Swale, for that is where all the Boon Good Fellows come from.

Ouse. Under correction, Aire, I submit it should be "East Riding"; for our fellows are always standing up on their legs to defend the downtrodden and uphold the right; and they are all lovers of strong ale to a man.

Swale. North, East and West, I have finished, for you are all a pack of barbarians, and with all your knowledge you have not yet learned the rudiments of courtesy.

For myself, I was taught from my infancy to reverence this outspoken, much-travelled, deep-drinking forelder of mine, and I shall go on reverencing him, but not another word of his great speech will I relate to you.

Wharfe. And yet, Swale, it is far too fine to pass over in silence, so, with your permission, I will continue:

> My Bully rocks (quoth he), I've been experienced long
> In most of Liquors that is counted Strong:
> Of *Claret, White-wine* and *Canary Sack*,
> *Renish* and *Malago*, I've had no lack:
> *Sider, Perry, Metheglin*, and *Sherbet*,
> *Coffee* and *Mead*, with *Punch* and *Chocolet*:
> *Rum* and *Tea*——

Aire. What nonsense is this, Wharfe? Coffee and Chocolate, Sherbet and Tea? Are these strong drinks I should like to know? I begin to think Swale was right after all, for in our parts these are the beverages of the watery-eyed teetotal school of drinkers.

Wharfe. You must not confuse these ancient liquors with the wishy-washy stuff sold in your own glittering restaurants, Aire. You must not imagine that this Boon Good Fellow was referring to the coffee or chocolate or tepid tea that you get in Boar Lane. Notice the subtle juxtaposition of his drinks. Punch *and* Chocolate: Coffee *and* Mead: Rum *and* Tea. And depend on it, the chocolate and the coffee and the tea were no more than dashes of flavouring: afterthoughts—nothings. Not that I recommend these dilutions. Not that he cared a hang about them; nor

about the "*Lemonad*" that he mentions a little later on. Remember, he is only working up slowly but methodically to his tremendous climax, which I shall never reach if you raise any more of your pestilential objections.

To resume:

*Rum* and *Tea*, *Azora Wine*, *Maderry*,
*Vin-de-Paree*, *Brag*, Wine with *Rosemary*,
*Stepony*, *Usquebath*, besides all these,
*Aqua Celestis*, *Cinnamon*, *Hearts-ease* :
Brave *Rosa Solis* and other Liquors fine,
*Rasburry Wine*, *Pur-royal* and *Shampine*,
*Malmsey* and *Viper-wine*, all these I pass:
*Frontineack*; with excellent *Ipocras*:
*Lac'd Coffee*, *Twist*, *Old Pharoh*, and *Old Hoc*,
*Juniper*, *Brandy* and *Wine de Langue-Dock*.
*Mum*, *Cherry-wine*, *Langoon*, and *Lemonad*,
*Sherry*, and *Port a Port*, both White and Red,
*Pomegranate*, *Mirtle*, and *Isop-wine* I know,
*Ipres* and *Orleance*, *Coos*, and eke *Anjow*,
*Burgundian-wine*, *Coecubum*, *Sage* and *Must*,
*Fennel* and *Worm-wood-wine* have past my Gust,
*Hydromel*, *Mulsom*, Wine boil'd with *Southern-wood*,
*Opimium*, *Smirna*, and *Biaeon* good:
*Temetum*, *Lora*, and brave *Muskadel*,
*Rumney* and *Nectar* too that doth excell:
*Sicilian*, *Naples* and *Lorain Wine*,
*Moravia*, *Malta* and *Corsica* fine:
*Tent*, *Muskatine*, *Brandy*, and *Alicant*,
Of all these Liquors I've had no scant,
And several others, but none do I find,
Like Humming *Northern* ALE to please my mind.

SWALE. Excellently spoken, Wharfe! And now let me take it up again while you draw breath. For, in spite of my protestations, I cannot allow any other man but myself to sing the glories of this great drink. Know then, each and all of you:

It's pleasant to the Taste, strong and mellow,
He that affects it not, is no boon Fellow.

He that in this Drink doth let his senses swim
There's neither wind nor storms will pierce on him.
It warms in Winter, in Summer opes the Pores,
'Twil make a Sovereign Salve 'gainst cuts and Sores
It ripens Wit, exhillerates the Mind,
Makes Friends of Foes, and Foes of Friends full kind:
It's Phisical for Old Men, warms their Blood,
Its Spirits makes the Coward's courage good:
The Tattered Beggar being warm'd with Ale,
Nor Rain, Hail, Frost nor Snow, can him Assail:
He's a good man with him can then compare;
It makes a Prentise great as the Lord Mayor:
The Labouring Man, that toiles all day full sore,
A pot of Ale at Night doth him Restore,
And makes him all his Toil and pains forget
And for another day-work he's then fit;
There's more in drinking Ale, sure then we wot,
For most Ingenious Artists love a Pot——

WHARFE. Steady now, Swale; and pass over the horrid effects of over-drinking: how it turns great wits into great sots, and let me push on to the very essence of his dithyrambus:

Oh the rare Virtues of this Barley Broth;
To Rich and Poor it's Meat and Drink and Cloth.
The Court here stopt him, and the Prince did say,
Where may we find this *Nectar*, I thee pray?
The boon good Fellow answer'd, I can tell,
*North-Allerton* in *Yorkshire* doth excell
All *England*, nay all *Europe*, for strong Ale.
If thither we Adjourne, we shall not fail
To taste such humming Stuff, as I dare say,
Your Highness never tasted to this day——

SWALE. There you have it pat, though I myself was taught to say "all Christendom" in place of "all Europe," but I will not press the point. Rather let me continue this rare tale:

They hearing this, the House agreed upon
All for Adjournment to *North-Allerton*:

Madam *Bradley's* was the chief Hous then nam'd,
There they must tast this noble Ale so fam'd,
And nois'd abroad in each place far and near.
Nay, take it, *Bradley*, for strong Ale and Beer
Thou hast it loose, there's none can do so well,
In brewing Ale thou dost all else excell.
Adjournment day being come there did appear
A brave full house, *Bacchus* himself was there,
This *Nectar* was brought in, each had his Cup,
But at the first they did but sipple up
This rare *Ambrosia*, but finding that
'Twas grateful to the Taste, and made them chat,
And laugh and talk, O, then when all was out,
They call'd for more, and drank full Cans about;
But in short space, such strange Effects it wrought
Amongst the Courtiers, as *Bacchus* never thought
Or dream'd upon: His wise Men it made Fools,
And made his Councellors to look like Owles.
The simple sort of Fellows it made prate,
And talke of Court Affairs, and things of State:
And those that were dull Fellows when they came
Were now turn'd nimble Orators of Fame.
And such of them was thought to be no Wits
Were Metamorphis'd into excellent Poets. . . .
Those that were lame and came there with a staff
Threw't quite away, which made the Prince to laugh:
The Cripple, which did Crutches thither bring,
Without them now did hop about and sing.

Ouse. I am all impatience to taste this ale, for I am convinced it will help me finish that grave sonnet on Beverley that has eluded me this twelvemonth.

Wharfe. Make no doubt of it, Ouse, it will; though it is, on the whole, more productive of shanties and catches than sonnets. The great thing is that one should be, so to say, nourished on the bottle from birth, else it has far other consequences. Now Bacchus and his courtiers, as you know, were brought up on the flask, pure and simple, so that this barley brew of ours flew straight to their fat heads. Bacchus himself being so closely akin to Jupiter, was not so easily

bowled over, but his courtiers were knocked down like skittles in an alley.

SWALE. Or as the poet sayeth:

> Some o'er the Stools and Forms did skip and leap,
> Some knack'd their fingers, no plain word could speak:
> Some shak'd their legs and armes with great delight,
> Some curst and swore, and others they did fight;
> Some antick tricks did play like a *Baboon*,
> Some knit their brows, did shake their Heads and frown.
> Some *Maudlin* drunken were, and wept full sore,
> Others fell fast asleep, begun to snore:
> Thousands of Lies and Stories some did tell,
> Their Tongues went like the Clapper of a Bell;
> Others were Tongue-Tied, could not speak one word,
> And some did cast their Reckoning up at Board.
> Some sung aloud and did deaf their Fellows,
> Making a Noise worse than *Vulcan's* Bellows——

WHARFE. Hold! I smell bad wine here! Let me jump the ditch:

> Some talk'd of Gray-hounds, some of running Horses,
> Some talk'd of Hounds, and some of Cocks o' the game.
> Some nought but Hawks and setting-dogs did name,
> Some talk'd of Battels, Seiges and great Warrs,
> And what great Wounds and Cuts they had and Scars,
> Some very Zealous were, full of Devotion,
> But being Sober then had no such Notion:
> Some there were all for drinking healths about,
> Others did rub the Table with their Snout——

WHARFE. In short, some, far from being metamorphosed into excellent poets, were changed as if by Circe into execrable Hogs.

SWALE. But only the grosser few of them. For the rest, they were so incredibly refined and exalted by this draught that they surpassed themselves in word and deed—so much so that—

> A Stranger coming by, did hear the Noise,
> He step'd into the House to see the Boyes:

Such sights he saw, as he ne'er see before,
Which made him Laugh untill his sides were sore.
His Horse did follow and saw the Quaffing,
He Neigh'd aloud, and broke his Girts with laughing:
These Antick Sights made *Bacchus* to admire,
And then he did begin for to Enquire
What Priviledges were bestow'd upon
This famous Ale Town of *North-Allerton.*
The Answer was that it was known
To have four Fairs i' th' year, a Bourrough-Town,
One Market every week and that was all.

WHARFE (*dolorously*). "And that was all." . . .
SWALE.

This moved *Bacchus* presently to call
For a great Jug which held about five Quarts,
And filling't to the Brim; Come here, my Hearts,
Said he, wee'l drink about this merry Health,
To the Honour of the Town, their State and Wealth.
For by the Essence of this Drink I swear,
This Town is Famous for strong Ale and Beer;
And for the sake of this good Nappy Ale,
Of my great favour it shall never fail,
For to promote quick Return and Trade,
For all strong Ale and Beer that here is made:
So to't they went, and drunk full Healths about,
Till they drunk Money, Wit and Senses out:
For whilst one drop of Ale was to be had,
They Quaft, and drunk it round about like mad.
When all was off, then out they pull'd the Tapps,
And stuck the Spiddocks finely in their Hats,
And so Triumphantly away they went,
But they did all Agree with one Consent
To *Easingwold* they then away would pass,
With *Nanny Driffield* there to drink a Glass——-

AIRE. Enough, enough and more than enough! I protest this is developing into a common carouse. Indeed, I begin to doubt if this ale was all that was claimed for it, or else why should Bacchus want to go to Easingwold?

WHARFE. For three reasons, pig-headed Aire. First,

because there was no more ale left at Northallerton, they having emptied all the taps and stuck the very spiddocks in their hats; second, because there was a long-standing feud between Northallerton and Easingwold as to which of them really brewed the strongest ale; third, because Bacchus and his pards very naturally felt the need of stretching their legs and taking in a stock of fresh air after such an orgy. And certainly they had ample time to do so on that nineteen miles of hard road between these two famous places.

. . . . .

SWALE (*at a great rate*).

For *Bacchus* having heard of her strong Ale,
He swore by *Jupiter*, he would not fail
To have a merry bout if he did find
Her Nappy Ale to please his Princely Mind:
When they came there a Flaggon was brought in,
Hold Gentlemen, before we do begin,
Crys one Boon Blade, let me declare to you,
Some things which I of this same Ale doe know.
So bowing to the Prince, he thus began,
May't please your Highness and you Gentlemen
I've Travell'd thorow the most parts of *France*,
As *Picardy*, *Brest*, *Bretaigne*, and *Provence*:
*Normandy*, *Bevois*, *Poitu* and *Champaigne*,
With *Aquitain*, *Burgundy*, and *Lorrain*:
*Geneva*, *Savoy*, *Longuedock*; also
Within the Kingdom of *Spaine Oniedo*:
*Lean*, *Navarr*, *Corduba*, and so on,
Through *Biscay*, *Toledo* and *Catelone*,
*Castile*, *Valentia*, *Venice*, *Florence*,
*Mantua*, *Millain*, *Urbin*, *St. Lawrence*:
*Portuguall*, *Naples*, *Italy*, *Holland*,
*Germany*, *Denmarke*, *Sweedland*, *Poland*,
*Hungary*, *Muscovia*, *Cephalonia*,
*Turky*, *Transilvania* and *Sclavonia*:
*Media*, *Persia*, and *Mesopotamia*,
*Palestine*, *Armenia*, and *Arabia*;

*Parthia*, *Syria*, *Caldea*, and *Tartary*,
*East* and *West Indies*, *China* and *Barbary*:
*Numidia*, *Lybia*, and *Mexicana*,
*Ethiopia*, *Egypt* and *Messena*;
*Peru*, the *Grecian Isles*, *Sicillia*,
*Canary Isles*, *Corsica*, and *Sardinia*.
These Country Wines, and other Liquors rare,
With *England's* humming Ale can not compare;
For in my thoughts it doth most Drinks excell,
And this same Nappy Ale doth bear the Bell,
Above most Ale; for herein is such Art,
Come when you will it's neither Sweet nor Tart;
In Summer, Winter Weather, Raine or Fair,
Thunder, Sunshine, Misty or serene Air:
In Frost or Snow, Morning, Noon or Night;
Or when you please this Ale is alwayes Right:
Neither thicker, nor thinner, nor paler,
Nor higher Colour'd, Newer nor staler:
Stronger, nor smaller, it hath no Fellow,
Sweeter nor Sowerer, but alwayes Mellow:
And fit to drink what time soe'er you come,
This is the pure strong Brittish Islands Rum;
Hold, cry'd the Prince——

Ouse. And well he might——

Wharfe. I am only afraid, Swale, that if you continue to recite at that lively pace, you will not only overtax your lungs, but you will also deprive Ouse and Aire of at least a portion of the Boon Fellow's eloquence. And for myself I should hate any word of it to fall on deaf ears: much less of the glowing peroration and recantation of Bacchus that follows it: and especially of his excellent Latinity. For all these reasons I will continue this inexhaustible poem myself while you take a deep breath.

Hold, cry'd the Prince, for thou now more hast said
Of this same Ale, then's Truth, I am affraid:
Yee Gods, the Prince then Cry'd, if this be true,
I'll leave my Government of Wine to you;
And list myselfe 'mongst Ale Boys that are famous
For now, *Paulo Majora Canamus*;

So let us now fall on, fill up my Can,
Let each one take his Cup, observe his man,
And let us drink, until we all be Tipsie
*Ego tuquoque, ille et ipse*
*Vive Le Roy*, great *Bacchus* then begins,
God bless him, cry'd the Courtiers and his Friends;
This Health and several others went about,
Then growing warm, they all let up a shout;
Most famous Ale, if we thy worth had known,
Then we had hasted sooner to the Town.
Oh Ladds, said *Bacchus*, I never thought t'have found
Such pleasant Nectar, here on English ground
I wonder any will himselfe Confine;
From bousing Ale to swill himself in Wine:
The Juice of Grapes shall be no more o' th' Quorum
But Nappy Ale, *Hordia Far a Forum.*
Wine's but an Ass, when Ale doth come in Play
If it be like the Ale we drink this day.

AIRE. You mean, Wharfe, the ale we hope or propose to drink this day. For my part, I should appreciate this interminable rhyme better with wetter lips.

XVIII

WHARFE. There are, I think, only one hundred and sixty-two more lines, excluding the jolly catch, and I should be sorry to scamp any one of them. Howsomever I can sympathise with your sufferings, Aire, for it was under the stimulus of this intoxicating poem that I myself once set out from old Bedale town of an August morning to walk to Northallerton with no other purpose than to taste this Ale, that proved so agreeable to Bacchus; vowing, at the moment of starting, not to let the ale of any other hamlet, village or road house pass my lips until I set foot in the cobbled Market Place of Northallerton itself. After all, I reasoned, it is only eight miles away, and though the road is bursting with blisters and the sun is clearly on the side of the devil, I shall survive. All the same, it was not without

a severe conflict that I passed down the noble high street of that old town which is, I take it, that rose-red city half as old as time which the poet speaks of elsewhere——

Swale. Yet chiefly famous for the grave dignity of its ancient Church, for its hunting fillies and Shire horses, and especially for the number of its inns. Indeed I believe that with the exception of Northallerton itself—the mother-town of all other inns—it has more inns to the square yard than any other town in England.

Ouse. Except Beverley and York——

Aire. And Skipton——!

Wharfe. And Otley and Tadcaster, of which did not the great Longfellow observe (and how truly!), "The Smith a mighty man is he!" For Tadcaster is cram-jam full of his inns!——

XIX

Swale. You were talking about Bedale.

Wharfe. Where it was with extreme difficulty I evaded the clutch of the White Bear, the Black Swan, the Black Lion, and several other amazing animals, that lunged at me from either side of the street. But my vows bound me and I was not to be so easily overcome. And so on to the shock of Leeming Bar——

Swale. I do not like the word shock——

Wharfe. Even so, it *was* a shock; a dreadful little place with an inn at the very corner where the Northallerton road cleaves the Great North Road, and where a man, taking his courage in both hands, and putting his trust in God, stumbles forward to death or glory. For there the Hogs travel so fast and so close together in both directions that they seem like one long horrible scaly dragon with a smoking mouth, a swishing tail, and a damnable scream of defiance in the bargain.

Ouse. But you outwitted them?

WHARFE. Not I, but St. Christopher, who took me under his wing and hurled me across under their very noses, though he dumped me, I say, outside that sad little inn trembling from top to toe. I will not say how sorely I was tempted to enter, or how the devil promised a pint of ale would set me right again, or how I hurried on past that woeful place with its dreadful foundries.

SWALE. I protest there is but one little foundry; and the other chimney belongs to the Vale of Mowbray Brewery.

WHARFE. Then it is curious that the devil who tempted me by so many specious arguments forgot to mention that one potent fact. For though I was strong enough to walk past the inn, I would unquestionably have fallen to a whole brewery. However, pushing manfully on past cornfields and barley-fields and oatfields and ploughed fields and ryefields and dry fields——

XX

AIRE. What has all this to do with the Northallerton Ale?

WHARFE. I am approaching that steadily, Aire, though I am still six miles away, and the sun is behaving abominably. And yet every now and then I am cheered by passing a milestone. And it is a fact that—at times like this—a milestone passed lifts one up almost as much as a pint of bitter.

OUSE. For myself I have no stomach for these visionary pints.

WHARFE. Nor I neither, honest Ouse, though that was a wholesome thought. The devil, however, put far other thoughts into my brain-pan. For, he said, think for a moment, how many miles a man *can* walk on a pint. Think of the potency of a pint; think how much shorter it would make this road to Northallerton. And I began asking myself seriously and dangerously, how far can a man walk on a pint?

AIRE. To the next pub.

SWALE. A foolish answer, Aire, to a sensible question. For my part, I should say a man can walk at least five miles on a pint of common beer; and at least ten miles on a pint of our own uncommon ale.

WHARFE. So powerful is a pint, so much strength does it convey to the legs that I have actually seen a Hog stagger out of an inn and stumble—as Aire truly said—as far as the next without exhaustion. Granted it was in our own shire, where the Hogs are still not entirely beyond redemption and the ale is above suspicion. Buoyed up, then, by these thoughts, I walked steadfastly on to Morton, where the devil tempted me a second time. And this time, realising his previous mistake, he brought his artillery to the attack. Which is like the devil. His first attack is a mere reconnoitre to throw dust in a man's eyes and make him cocksure of victory against such a feeble adversary. His second attack is a much more serious affair, which only a strong man, well-armed with the Faith, can withstand. But his third attack is the very *devil*, indeed, and only a really valiant man or a truly prayerful little woman can survive it.

AIRE. I am only too anxious to learn how the devil outmanœuvred you in this second assault, and what you have to say for yourself anyhow.

WHARFE. Well, then, as I entered that sober little village of Morton-upon-Swale, the first thing I clapped eyes on was the Nonplus Inn, complete with a sign depicting that marvellous thoroughbred, and at the door stood a tidy body of a woman with a white apron to welcome all-comers. And at that precise moment up rumbled a drayload of ale; barrels and barrels of it—which I believe the devil had specially brewed and seasoned for my downfall.

SWALE. Nonsense, Wharfe: it was the usual day's ration for that village from the Vale of Mowbray.

WHARFE. Then they are the most prodigious drinkers I ever heard tell of, for the barrels were in tiers like toppling

pyramids and towers, and all of them had a girth like the Fat Woman at the fair. Nevertheless, I say, I passed on.

AIRE. And you expect us to believe you?

WHARFE. I passed on, I say, with my heart in my boots, and my tongue lolling out like any hound's: a man without hope and without a friend; for I was in so sad a case that even the little children playing outside the Green Dragon at the far end of that accursed village—at least I think it was the Green Dragon, though I was too far gone to look it squarely in the eyes—even the children, I say, looked at me askance as not knowing whether to boo or to cheer. But I slunk past before they could make up their minds, and before I was fairly out of that vile zone, I came in full view of Ainderby Steeple, which, by the way, is not a steeple as I understand a steeple—but a tower.

SWALE. And yet how lovely a tower, standing up tiptoe on its little hill, as it has done these hundreds of years, drinking in the beauty of that sweet vale.

WHARFE. Say rather feasting its eyes—or loopholes—but not drinking: certainly not drinking. And even I was uplifted a little, too, to come suddenly upon those little cottages with their fluted red roofs and garlands of roses and that peaceful Hall half hidden among cool trees.

AIRE. And the inns? Were they cool too?

. . . . .

WHARFE. The church of St. Helen was extremely cool when I went inside to renew my vows.

OUSE. I hope, Wharfe, it is a Catholic church?

WHARFE. In the beginning it certainly was, and if my prayer is answered, will be again.

But talking of old churches—how cold they appear to us of the old Faith! Me they chill to my marrow until I begin to feel as stiff in the joints and as cold as those dusty white

effigies of our knights and ladyes doomed to lie there unsolaced by our sweet litanies. What a difference a little red lamp makes to a Sanctuary: and a couple of candles flickering! What a warmth is exhaled by a Missal and what a homeliness there is about a chapel to Our Lady! It is true that many of these sacred places are at last changing hands again, and that at least is significant.

SWALE (*eagerly*). You mean they are being returned to their rightful owners?

WHARFE. *Sancta Simplicitas.* I mean that the noble dukes and earls finding such crumbling ruins a mort of trouble are generously bequeathing them in trust to the nation.

OUSE. Which promptly hands them over to the Holy Office of Works.

WHARFE. Well, I have nothing but praise for the Office of Works—although it is rather a shock to come upon their name engraved on a bronze tablet outside such an Abbey as Rievaulx or Jervaulx or Whitby. I cannot but admire the zeal which prompts them to restore a broken chancel and a broken cross, especially a broken Saxon cross or a broken Norman buttress or a Sedilia. . . . My heart is all renewed again when I see them digging away to discover the exact site and extent of a buttery or a nave or even a cloister. I share their jubilation when they bring to light the chapel of St. Hilda and the ashes of a fire lit hundreds of years ago. And yet I cannot help thinking how much more laudable would be their efforts if they were to devote half as much time and care to restoring and preserving the old Faith which inspired these old builders. How delightful it would be if they were suddenly to discover that the heirs and successors of Rievaulx and the rest were still lurking in obscure corners of England and that they, of all men, were the most likely to know where everything belonged and, above all, where the vital Missing Link had been buried.

Ouse. You are right, Wharfe. Admirable as is their enthusiasm, for example, when they unearth a perfect specimen of an Early English Holy Water stoup or a twelfth-century Baptismal Font, what amazes me is that it never occurs to them to fill the one with Early English Holy Water, and to duck the lineal descendants of twelfth-century infants in the other!

. . . . .

Aire. And the wonder to me, Wharfe, is how comes it about that you who were talking about ale should suddenly become involved in these dry religious speculations.

Wharfe. Because, Aire, those were the thoughts that assailed me as I came down the steps of Ainderby Church and resumed my conflict with the devil. And you will admit at once that he had me then very much at a disadvantage, for my mood was fierce and turbulent, and I burnt with indignation. In short, my throat was parched, my head on fire, when I came face to face with the George and Dragon and the Wellington Heifer. . . . And Northallerton a good four miles away.

Aire. And you fell?

Wharfe. On the contrary, Aire, I walked gravely but sturdily into the Heifer and ordered a pint of ale. For, I argued, it is not that I cannot walk these paltry four miles without drinking, if I have a mind to try, but if I do I shall be in no condition to test the virtues of that strong stingo when I arrive. It behoves me, then, to quell my rebellious thoughts and put myself in a calm and forgiving mood again. Lastly, I reasoned, what nonsense is this about abstaining from ale, and what right has the devil to interfere in such an honest matter? Let him be about his own business and leave thirsty travellers alone.

Aire. I confess I do not follow this casuistical line of

argument; but if only to hear the upshot of this tedious tale I will let it pass. . . . So long as I know you fell, I am happy, and all I now want to know is what you have to say for this same ale-town of Northallerton.

WHARFE. What can one say but that it is a town after a man's own heart; a market town with a jolly Market Place as broad as a Yorkshire Pudding, but rather longer, set off with an inn in every nook and corner.

SWALE. And such inns!

WHARFE. Coaching inns, poaching inns, and broaching inns, they are all there, built in every style of Innchitecture since beer was first brewed. They call some Tudor and some Jacobean, but they are all in reality pure Northallerton, which is infinitely older and finer than either. And in between the inns there are narrow little Wynds and Closes and Yards, since every man who owns an inn (and that is the aim and ambition of every man jack of them) and every man who owns one of the jolly little shops or houses that separate the inns one from another, owns likewise a little Wynd or Yard and has his name blazoned proudly over the top of it like a charge. Let any man enter it on his peril! Most of them are so narrow and neighbourly, that it is a common and highly commendable custom there to clink glasses from one window ledge to the other before retiring to rest. But for myself, I was so taken up with one inn, that I had little time for exploration——

SWALE. You mean the Fleece?

WHARFE. The very Fleece: the Golden Fleece, and the very inn, I take it, where the Boon Good Fellow regaled Bacchus, whom we have too long left in the lurch. And it was in that inn that the nappy ale of Northallerton first passed my lips.

. . . . .

SWALE. And you found it good?

WHARFE. Of course it was good. Ale brewed at my own Tadcaster is bound to be good!

SWALE. What nonsense is this, Wharfe?

WHARFE. I say the ale they sell at Northallerton—more power to our maltsters!—is brewed some at Tadcaster, some at York, some at Thirsk, and some at Leeming Bar. And having done the round of all the inns, including the Nag's Head, the Oak Tree, the Three Tuns, the Old Golden Lion, the New Golden Lion, the Buck, the King's Arms, the Harewood Arms, the Masons' Arms, . . . and a dozen more: who more likely to know?

SWALE. Enough, for it is clear you were in no condition to obtain reliable information, and I tell you that the ale Bacchus tasted was brewed in the inn itself as is well known in those parts.

WHARFE. None the less I say, so numerous are its inns, and so hearty its henchmen, that they are compelled to draw on those other famous ale-towns I have mentioned lest the town's water-supply be drained dry. And why not, pray? Did not Bacchus wander a-maze and a-daze from Northallerton to Easingwold, and from Easingwold to York, and pronounce all the ales alike famous? And no wonder, for Northallerton was far too jovial a place to keep the secret of good brewing all to itself. Having discovered the perfect recipe and broached the first nappy barrel, it said (in so many words):

Here is ale. Let us bequeath the secret in perpetuity to the County; let us not be stingy with our Stingo, let it wash our Shire like a golden foam. But let us see to it that it does not flow over the boundaries into Durham or Westmorland or Lancashire or Derby; above all, let it not trickle down England into Sussex, lest it become contaminated with their watery swipes and bowl those scrawny-cauf'd coves over.

SWALE. Be that as it may, Wharfe, I would have you all lift your eyes—and look ahead at that modest, desirable Stang Inn before us.

OUSE. Lauda Sion!

XXI

SWALE. But before we reach it and regale ourselves, I am determined to make an end of that Bacchanalian rhyme of ours, if only to put you all in a right frame of mind again.

WHARFE. Well, then, pass over the part that relates how Bacchus raised Nanny Driffield to the rank of "Countess of Stingo" by true Letters Patent, and proceed.

SWALE.

*Bacchus* then took a great Full Flagon up,
And drunk the Countess' health left not a sup,
To an old Blade, the Prince said thou shalt follow,
Then, *Tu eris mihi magnus Apollo.*
Each of the Courtiers did then pledge the same,
And now in earnest did begin the game.
The new made Countess to gratifie them all.
For a Hogshead of her choicest Ale, did call:
Upon the Hogshead *Bacchus* got astride,
Now Lads he said this Ale is Deified.
A Countess, a Countess, they then proclaim'd,
You all the Country o'er will now be Fam'd:
Drink Prince she said, and all the Noble Crew,
Drink till such time, you wad your Noses blue:
Here's Ale said they, so pure, so clear, so fine,
It is more grateful to the Taste than Wine:
Nay this same Ale will make the World admire us
*Efficit Ingenios nobilis Ala Viros:*
This famous Liquor, we know doth far out goe
The Poets *Nectar* and *Ambrosia* too:
The Gods *Nepenthe* with it cannot compare,
This is the Soveraign Antidote 'gainst Care.

AIRE. Hold, I smell a false quantity here!

SWALE. Nothing shall stop me till I reach the end!

AIRE. God knows I shall not try.

SWALE.

Some Townsmen hearing this, listened a while,
Then into th' House they went, begun to smile;
You'r welcome, Gentlemen, sit down, said the Prince
And do as we do: If it be no Offence
The townsmen said, wee'l joyn ourselves with you
And try this day, to Whom Honour is due,
Whether to Wine or Ale; it shall be Try'd,
Agreed, Agreed, they with one voice all Cry'd.
The Townsmen did perceive the Courtiers warm.
Six in a hand, sayes one, will do no harm:
You Grape Boyes now shall know before we part,
Wine's not the only Nourisher of Art;
When *Recubans sub Tegmine Fagi*
We drink strong Ale: It makes us of the *Magi*.
Well said, cry'd *Bacchus*, about then let it goe,
As long as any here can shake a Toe:
For as *Scribendo disces Scribere*,
Just so *Bibendo disces Bibere*.
O brave *Colonus* see it go about,
And let us now all Joyne, set foot to foot,
And drink all off, I'll not contend for praise,
From henceforth this same Ale shall have the Bayes.
Wine shall not once be nam'd, where this comes in
He that names Wine that day commits a Sin,
Wee'l all be merry, I'll hear no Clamour,
Let's drink and sing, *Omnia Vincit Amor*.

Health upon Health did post about with speed,
Till all the Courtiers were sore flusht indeed;
*Qui Color albus erat*, with a *Faldo*,
I plainly see *Nunc est contrarius Albo*.
One Townsman said: Let us our hold now keep;
And we shall quickly lay them all to sleep,
Bumpers and double Tankards did go round,
*Bacchus* from 's hogshead Throne fell to the ground,
Some forwards fell, backwards and sidewayes some,
Till on to th' Floor, they all did tumble down:
Let's throw them on an heap, a Townsman said,
And Sing a Catch about them, I have made.
Agreed, they cry'd, the Wine Boyes they shall know,

That they to good Ale topers now must bow:
Let's throw the God above, Hee'l spoile his Cloaths.
Marry, sayes one, I think hee's broke his Nose,
He hath all bedaub'd his Suit of Tabby,
But *Sorte tua contentus Abi.*
Said they: The Catch begun then by the Blades,
The Tune is, Haile unto the Myrtle Sheades.

### THE CATCH

Colonus and Bacchus did meet
Each one to commend his own Liquor;
The Juice of the Grape was sweet,
But Barly Oyl ran down the quicker:
Colonus did challenge the Gods,
To fight in defence of his Barley,
But Bacchus perceiving the odds,
Desired a Friendly Parley.

They drank full Bumpers about,
And Bacchus an Health did begin,
The Bacchanalians gave a great shout,
The Collonians then thronged fast in:
They drunk double Tankards around,
Till the Grape Boyes begun for to Glore
The Rusticks ne'er flinched their ground,
Till Bacchus fell down on the Floor.

Colonus did heartily laugh,
And about the God they did dance,
Full Pots about they did quaff:
Whilest Bacchus lay still in a Trance.
The Grape Boyes were beat out of play,
And at length poor Bacchus did Rise:
To Colonus he yielded the day,
So the Rusticks obtained the Prize.

WHARFE. Well sung, Swale! . . . Indeed, I think I would end on that lusty note.

SWALE. There is still the Epilogue about York!

WHARFE. True, they went to York and had a tankard of that ale called Knocker-Down.

SWALE.

> And in the Morning when they did awake,
> They cursed and swore that all their heads did ake;
> O *Yorkshire*, *Yorkshire*: Thy Ale it is so strong,
> That it will kill us all if we stay long:
> So thay agreed a Journey for to make
> Into the South, some Respit there to take,
> But in short space again they said they'd come,
> And Taste some more of this same *Yorkshire* Hum:
> Nay Bacchus swore to come he would not fail,
> And glut himselfe with *Yorkshire* Nappy Ale;
> It is so pleasant, mellow too, and fine,
> That *Bacchus* swore he'd never more drink Wine.

. . . . .

AIRE (*at the door of the inn*). Perhaps we shall find him here! (*Rushes in.*)

OUSE. I will begin with Knocker-Down.

SWALE. It will certainly bowl you over.

. . . . .

XXII

SCRIBE. And now, my most excellent, most patient, most praiseworthy Pater, I will rejoin you while these thirsty Lads are, I hope, solacing themselves with that same ale of ours; for I fear I have left you all too long in the cold.

PATER. In with you after them lest they should all be overpowered.

SCRIBE. Little likelihood of that—more's the pity! For, unless I am gravely mistaken, they will be hard put to it to get ale at all, since it is most certainly a place and a time within the meaning of the Act.

PATER. What Act, pray?

SCRIBE. Why the most outrageous Act that was ever enacted: the Act Abominable: the Act Tyrannical: the Act Arbitrary: the Act Intolerable, and not to be borne. In a word, the Licensing Act, that denies to an honest Walker the honest ale for which his honest throat clamours.

PATER. There is, I think, some mistake here; though it is some little time since I trod an English road I am convinced that a man who tramps even a beggarly three miles can have a drink when he has a mind to.

SCRIBE. I am sorry to say, you are a long way behind the times. You have not kept pace with the pawing steed of Progress. Let me tell you that whether a man walks three miles or thirty miles or no miles at all, he cannot demand a drink at any place within the meaning of the Act at any time except the times provided by the Act itself. You must remember that there is nothing like ale for finding out the weak spots in a man. In a fool, it flies straight to the head: in a Hog, it flies simultaneously to the legs and head, since in both he is criminally deficient. So it has come to pass that the doors of even the lonely inns are closed on all men, honest or dishonest: drunk or sober: legstrong or headstrong: knock-kneed, flat-footed, swell-footed, bandy-legged or kay-legged.

PATER. What! Am I to understand that there is no distinction made between true travellers and Hogs; between inns solitary and gin-shops; between honest drinkers and hard drinkers; between holy thirst and besotted desire?

SCRIBE. Not within the meaning of the Act.

PATER. But what is the meaning of the Act?

SCRIBE. It is an American Act meaning Liberty.

PATER. Open the door immediately, for I am all on fire to hear how those four fare.

. . . . .

XXIII

VOICE (OF LIBERTY). I am sorry, gents. It is out of hours.

WHARFE. Pardon me, Madam, it is *never* out of hours.

SWALE. We have walked.

AIRE. Ouse is blistered.

OUSE. Aire is lying.

WHARFE. We do not ask for Negus, nor yet for Old Tom, nor even for Gin-and-It., let alone Crême de Menthe. We should not dream of asking you for anything so heady, or so obviously within the meaning of the Act as that intoxicating water of Booze that bubbles over its barrels.

VOICE (OF LIBERTY). What might you be wanting, gents?

SWALE (*humbly*). Only ale.

VOICE (OF LIBERTY). Oh, that will be quite all right. (*Fills tankards.*)

WHARFE. *Noblesse Oblige!* Such sanity! Such courtesy. Such nice discrimination! Now, had we insisted on any of those spirituous liquors so clearly within the meaning of the Act, there would—quite rightly—have been the devil to pop, not to speak of his corks; but ale is another matter. Here in the silence of the hills it is still held in honour as a holy drink, not to be polluted by any Act; above all, not to be denied to any honest man.

SWALE. It warms in Winter: in Summer opes the pores.

OUSE. It is, Aire, a Sovereign Salve against cuts and sores.

WHARFE. Let us couple with the toast of Liberty—Sanity.

AIRE. And may all politicians be buried, head-downward, in barrels!

XXIV

PATER. I am happy to think, Scribe, there is still one corner of England not within the meaning of that tyrannical Act.

SCRIBE. It is a fairly considerable corner, roughly separated from the rest by the Tees in the North, the Sheffield Blades in the South, and the Loons in the West. But I would not have you make a song about it lest the perpetrators of that Act should also discover it and attempt to pollute it like the rest.

PATER. Even so, being perfectly convinced that these Lads will have no further difficulty in obtaining ale so long as they remain in these civilised parts, I would have you now get them back to the Road with all possible speed, for I begin to fear they are going to sing about ale, to the exclusion of everything else in the Shire.

SCRIBE. Why, what else would you have?

PATER. I miss those grave descriptions of scenery that dignify and enhance the travel-books of other men.

SCRIBE. You would not, I hope, have me daub this noble prose with purple patches?

PATER. The moors are full of purple patches, so why should they not embellish this book?

SCRIBE. They have embellished far, far too many books already, and for my part I have promised the moors that I will not call them either stark, or strong, or inscrutable, or dour, or incomprehensible, or even eerie, and I have made a pact with the brook and the bracken and the ling that I will not maul or maltreat them in any way whatsoever.

PATER. Well, then, let us hear an intelligent discussion forthwith; for I have always observed in the erudite works of other men that no sooner do the chief characters come out in the open air than they immediately begin to discuss some profound problem in a devastatingly clever way, as opposed to mere footling.

SCRIBE. Fortunately, my dear Pater, I can introduce you to just such a discussion; for at the very moment those lusty Lads emerged from the Stang Inn they were engaged in a most spirited controversy themselves.

PATER. What about?

SCRIBE. It was about a mile, and it was exactly a mile long.

PATER. *Miserere Domine!*

XXV

AIRE. I tell you the longest mile is the first mile, especially if one sets out uphill before breakfast, for then the joints are not properly loosened; the body not oiled; the blood turbid; the head most probably aches; the feet are inclined to blister and the spirit is rebellious.

OUSE. God save me from Aire in the morning!

SWALE. Certainly he talks like a novice of this noble exercise.

WHARFE. Even so, there is some truth in what he says. No man is at his best in the very early morning, particularly if he has slept out under a wet and cheerless sky.

AIRE. No boots fit at such a time; and if they are sodden, it is the very devil.

OUSE. A man is no walker who does not drop into his stride within five minutes of starting; and for my part I like nothing better than to walk five miles before taking bite or sup, drinking great gulps of frosty air and singing songs about the dawn.

AIRE. I would have all early-rising poets, especially such as sing false songs about the dawn, choked at birth, for they are a public nuisance.

OUSE. A man who cannot sing with the birds should be apprenticed to a dishonest trade with all speed, for he is no poet, never will be a poet, and is not fit to associate with true poets.

WHARFE. None of you is honest enough to admit it. You would like to be thought such fierce Walkers that once you have been wound up you could go on for ever without creaking.

Ouse. And so we could, if there were ale enough and beef enough and time enough between sun-up and sundown.

Wharfe. In spite of which, I maintain that the longest mile is the last mile of each day: provided it be a full day. Or rather, the last mile and a half. I put it to you all as honest fellows.

Swale. What? You too have not been hoodwinked?

Ouse. Say rather spellbound.

Aire. I am happy to think I have not suffered alone.

Wharfe. We have all suffered. It is one of the gins and pitfalls in the path; it is the test that eliminates the weak and refines the strong. You know it as well as I. You have walked through the heat of the day: you have done your thirty or forty miles without flinching; you passed the last milestone but one twenty minutes ago, and you know the last of all is just round the corner. In imagination, you are already at that inn which you know so well. Your feet are underneath the table, and you are drinking an enormous tankard of ale and devouring the better part of a ham-side. But just at that moment you come across It at a cross-roads. It says:

TO THINGUMMYBOB, 1½m.

or words to that effect——

And at the sight of that little ½ a great weariness comes over you and a sadness falls upon your soul.

Aire. And your feet are as lead——

Ouse. And your head swims——

Swale. And your tongue lolls out——

Wharfe. And your eyes bulge from their sockets as you stare at that mocking sign. For you who have laughed your way over half the Shire, cracking jokes with all and sundry, and singing songs as lustily as any lark, are, all of a sudden, soured and disillusioned, and curse yourself for a fool. Nevertheless, you must on or sleep the night in the ditch

with the other creeping things of the earth. Yet, though your strength has left you and your splendid stride is a mocking memory, you are very far from confessing defeat, and hurriedly whispering three Hail Marys and a prayer for the Lost Souls in Purgatory, you push on, determined not to look up again until you reach that thrice-blessed inn, though it be ten thousand leagues away; not though the Road sprouts jeering signposts like toadstools every ten yards. After plodding patiently on for another five miles —uphill all the way—tormented with the memories of all the sins you have committed since you were born, you look up again lest you should have passed the inn unbeknown to yourself. And there by the roadside, gaunt and horrible like a fiend newly sprung from the flames, is another signpost which says, or rather leers:

TO THINGUMMYBOB, ¾m.

AIRE. And then, indeed, you give up the ghost, and make a last Act of Contrition for all the sins of your past life.

OUSE. On the contrary, it is at such a moment that I tauten my thews, and am renewed like the eagle.

SWALE. For my part, I find it a great solace at such a moment to compose blazing letters of abuse to the Rural District Council responsible for such an egregious piece of surveying.

WHARFE. Even so, nothing remains but to bite the lip, take an enormous mouthful of fresh air and proceed: composing as you crawl wearily forward some dejected stanzas to Despair; or an Elegy for some unfortunate soul found dead in a ditch; or possibly an

EPITAPH FOR A YOUTH HACKED UP IN HIS PRIME

As for instance:

> Here lies a Youth by Hog dismembered,
> Hack'd up, alas! in pieces small;
> Deeply Lamented: Long Remembered
> After a Splendid Funeral.

Or an:

EPITAPH ON A YOUTH CAUGHT IN THE CLUTCH OF A FELL DISEASE

Here in this quiet Congregation
'Mongst mournful Saints and Sinners sad
Lies one (at least) who quit Creation
Unfeign'dly glad!
He held it in high veneration
And felt his love could never flag.
But when his boyish jubilation
Was blighted by Disease—the Hag—
He thought it time to make the station
*Death!*
So pack'd his bag!

And having meditated on these mournful themes, and walked a further two miles, you come to a sudden bend in the road and are emboldened to lift up the head again and step jovially into that excellent inn, whose sign you can surely discern through the dusk.

OUSE. Looking it squarely in the face, you read its jolly welcome:

Be not in haste,
Step in and taste
Good Ale for Nothing
To-morrow.

WHARFE. On the contrary you read:

TO THINGUMMYBOB, ¼m.

And then, indeed, you realise that it is only a trick of the devil to make you curse the very Road, or—commit the still more horrible sin of blasphemy, so that hastily making the sign of the Cross and shutting your eyes tightly, you step out blithely—being marvellously rejuvenated—for another three miles, and arrive to find supper sizzling in the pot, and ale so wondrously mellow that within five minutes of supping and feeding, all your fatigue leaves you and you go out again to receive the benediction of the stars. . . .

SWALE. All of which is true, Wharfe, as I can confirm from bitter experience. Nevertheless, it is not opportune, for we are yet far from approaching our last mile; nor are we even within hail of my river.

OUSE. But we have topped the rise!

AIRE. *Laus Deo!*

XXVI

WHARFE. You do well to praise God at such a moment, for there is something holy about all such moments. The heart is exalted; the blood beats high; and one is, for an instant, caught up into paradise. It is as if one stands on the Threshold of Things Accomplished and Noble Ideals Realised. It is, moreover, by these noble ridges that we know our County to be blessed above all the other counties of England; for they rear up one after the other, from north to south, inviting men to follow over the hills and far away. . . .

SWALE. Let us step out lustily to that measure, for it is downhill all the way to Arkengarthdale: then up over Reeth High Moor to Feetham—and my own river!

WHARFE. How rich is our County in rivers; in little dales and mighty dales; in crumbling castles, in abbeys and priories; in inns and sturdy villages; in scrambling walls and rugged roads; in boulders, screes and scars; in noble halls and pleasances; in lonely tarns, in moor and mountain; in wild birds; in tumbling ghylls; in gnarled oaks and ash and thorns; in firs and pines; in generous food; in lusty lads and lasses—in short—for my breath fails me!—in every decent thing the heart of man could desire, so much so, that to particularise them all would exhaust the patience and the credulity of all unfortunate exiles and foreigners!

OUSE. I was beginning to fear you would keep it up all the way to Ark——Ark———to that place with the ridiculous name which Swale is leading us to.

SWALE. Upon my soul, there is nothing ridiculous about Arkengarthdale, for it falls off the tongue like a madrigal. And when you reach it you will see that it is a green paradise watered by lovely Arkle Beck, which is one of my most bountiful feeders. I would have you watch it go tumbling down towards Reeth, and there throw itself into the arms of my river.

OUSE. And then what?

SWALE. And then, indeed, could I distract Wharfe's attention from his own hills, I would have you walk with me to Richmond. I do not say now: for our line is fixed; but in some aftertime when we have hurled the Hog from the Road—or at least from the Shire. But walk it we must; for it is a mortal sin to journey between Reeth and Richmond otherwise than on foot. For there you will find the cream of the riverside scenery of the world.

WHARFE. That is a tall claim, Swale.

AIRE. A monstrous piece of impudence.

OUSE. A notable feat of imagination.

SWALE (*out of hand*). For there, I say, Nature conspires to arrange everything with that nice regard to harmony so captivating to the wanderer. The mountains clasp the river in their mighty arms; the river hugs the road and the whole dale embraces the Walker and, as it were, kisses him. . . .

AIRE. I have never yet been embraced and kissed by a dale, Swale.

SWALE. I speak mystically, and not to be understood by the brades o' you. For I tell you all, I have never yet walked through my own dale without receiving a kiss of one kind or another.

. . . . .

OUSE. Our lasses are bold—but not so wanton as that. Though I remember once calling at an inn in my Riding —thirsty and hungry after a heavy morning's march, and

far too late for lunch in any other inn in the shire. . . . And even in that inn, the maid reproached me for calling when the table was swept clean, and vowed I should not have anything at all; though all the while she bustled about putting a rare meal together.

And while I smacked my lips over it, she sat down and talked to me; for, says she, the missus was out and she was a Tartar, if you like, and would send her packing if she knew she was helping me to the best cider in the cellar out of hours——

Lovely cider! says she.

Lovely wench! says I.

Sweet to the lips, says she.

Don't know till I taste, says I. For we were talking at cross-purposes. . . . But when I took my leave and pressed a thank-you into her hand and a kiss on her lips, which she put up for that purpose, I agreed *in toto* with all she had said. . . . A sweet wench i' faith, sweeter than any cider I ever tasted.

. . . . . .

Swale. And again I say, you are too fleshly to understand; for I was not speaking of the kiss of the lips, but rather of the warm kiss of the sun, the fierce kiss of the wind, the wet kiss of the rain or the odorous kiss of the hedgerows. One or other or all of these you will receive as you go on from glory to glory, past the wraith of Marrick Priory, past the ghost of Ellerton Abbey—towards Marske-on-the-Hill: the hillsides heavy with great clumps of pines and firs and lovely larches; and below you, my river; now jubilant as a jolly monk, now quiet as a little nun. And suddenly there rises before you that dazzling vista of battlements and towers—that once men called Camelot, and now—Richmond!

XXVII

WHARFE. While all this is true, Swale, I am bound to tell you of the disillusion I myself suffered when last on that road. To begin with, I had received the wet kiss of the rain all the way from Grinton to Richmond Hill.

OUSE. Where the Sweet Lass came from?

SWALE. The same—but again she was not for you!

WHARFE. So that when at last I arrived at that ravishing old town I was as wet without as dry within.

SWALE. Well then, like a sensible man, you walked into the King's Arms or the Black Lion or the Bishop Blaize or any other of those hospitable inns, and demanded refreshment.

WHARFE. I slunk into them all, one after the other, like a drowned rat, and received nothing at all.

SWALE. Until this moment, Wharfe, I have respected you as a truthful man.

WHARFE. And I tell you, Swale, I was hunted away from that Camelot of yours like a camelopard, or any other animal that pads along on foot. For the whole town was in the hands of the Hogs, who were celebrating some Hoggish festival or other, if there are any such things; each inn had been commandeered by their hordes, and there was no food to be had for any other. Beer, I certainly found; for the Hog's capacity is, fortunately, limited; but a man cannot make a meal of beer alone and my stomach clamoured for beef and bread, and—if possible—pickles. Indeed, so hard put to it was I, that in the end I had to sneak into an obscure café and drink tea and munch rolls like any maid.

SWALE. I hope it overlooked the incomparable Market Square?

WHARFE. It did and I looked out on a sorry spectacle; for the whole Square was swarming with Hogs manœuvring into position for their attack on the inns.

Worst of all, a fair—if one could call such a Pandemonium a fair—was being held for their amusement right in front of Holy Trinity Church, the bulk of which, Swale, has been too long in the hands of the shopkeepers. But what infuriated me most was to see that tottering old tower, which is justly the admiration of the whole world, set in the direct range of a coco-nut-shy, and only a thin canvas screen protected it from a fusillade of balls. At every moment I expected one to hit the tower and send it crashing down . . . and that was why I set off, immediately I had fed, to walk to Catterick Bridge and on to Danby Wiske on two cups of tea and three pestiferous rolls.

. . . . .

SWALE. But not, I hope, before you explored that Castle which is, as everyone knows, the most famous and the most holy of all the castles in Christendom.

AIRE. Why all this fuss about this Castle of Richmond?

OUSE. Ask no questions, Aire, for Swale is only too anxious to go on.

SWALE (*proudly*). Underneath that Castle, Arthur lies. Is that enough?

AIRE. More than enough. For I am stalled to death of hearing you swagger about your own Riding. A moment ago it was ale, and now its castles and kings, and I will no longer be muzzled. From now forward I propose telling you a few of the marvels, and glories, that have made my own dale the most feared and famous in England.

OUSE. There is a time for all things and a place; and it may be we shall yet be reduced to such an extremity of fatigue and such a paucity of thought that we shall be compelled to listen to Aire's story. But not yet, indeed. Indeed not yet. I am by nature a patient and a long-suffering man, not given to brag, and I should be loth to smother you

all with the amazing splendours of my own lands. None the less, if Swale brags, I, too, shall brag. If Aire brags, I shall at least insist on telling you an honest story so that you will all go home with a humble heart, and your tongues muffled like the clappers of funeral bells.

WHARFE. I am pained, my Lads, to hear this fratching, if such wild talk can be dignified by such a name. And I can only ascribe it to the fact that here on this remote rib-tickling road we are out of range of the Hogs. But let us not, for that reason, be lulled into a false sense of security. Be assured the Hogs will be after us at the first cross-road, and what chance shall we have against them if we each sulk in solitary dudgeon? Certainly Swale has had more than his share of glory; but we are still in his enormous lands, and have we not agreed to let each man have his day and his say? Above all, do we not each of us in his heart thrill to his peculiar glories? For Swale is far too modest a Lad to claim any of these things in a narrow personal kind of way. He speaks for all of us. And that is why I would have you all listen patiently to that story of Arthur which has been on the tip of his tongue since the moment we left Barney Castle.

XXVIII

SWALE. It is true, Wharfe, I am more proud of this signal glory than of any other prodigies that I have mentioned or intend shortly to mention.

WHARFE. Nor does the fact that this particular Marvel has been disputed; that other places as remote as Cornwall and Wales, and, I believe, Brittany, have laid claim to it, detract one jot or one tittle from that glory.

AIRE. Then, in the name of Justice and Truth, may I make so bold as to ask—why?

OUSE. Silence for the Grand Inquisitor!

SWALE. I am horrified to learn that a Fact so well

authenticated as this has been questioned at all; for it is at once the common talk and vaunt of my own peculiarly humble dalesmen.

Wharfe. Far be it from me, Swale, to cast doubt on it. And, indeed, I only mention those other cock-and-bull stories so that you can crush them once and for all, when telling your tale.

Swale. Well then, let me say right now that the thing that gives this story of mine the stamp of truth and the ring of sincerity is that it comes from the mouth of a cobbler. True, a down-at-heels cobbler, who had turned potter—but still a cobbler. Such a story from the lips of any other man might perhaps have been questioned, but from a cobbler, no! By St. Crispin, I say, no! A man who is hammering clout-headed nails into dalesmen's heels all day is not the man to tell a falsehood.

Ouse. Hammer and Last; Nails and Awl; these are certainly the marks of an honest man.

Aire. And yet I protest that the man who sold me these shoes which have been pinching me all the way over the Stang and which I shall certainly return to him with my curse at the first opportunity—was no great shakes.

Ouse. He must have been a descendant of that Ahasuerus who fell under the dreadful curse——

Wharfe. Nor can I believe, Swale, that this honest fellow was so shiftless as they make out; and I swear he was most certainly not mad. As for his being nagged by his wife until he was on the point of suicide, this I cannot accept for a moment.

## XXIX

Swale. Then, with your permission, Wharfe, and without any more interruptions, I will tell my tale. Now, in the first place, the name of this ever-to-be-remembered, honoured and, with due restraint, reverenced explorer was Potter

Thompson of this same town of Richmond, and none other. And one day, when trade was bad and leather at a premium, this same Bullyrock of a Thompson betook himself to the banks of my river to watch it, swirling and twisting beneath that great bastion of rock on which the Castle stands; for, as everyone knows and avers, there is no more magnificent sight in the world.

WHARFE. That, I take it, would be in the days before the gasometers had been erected there? I mean in the days before Progress had made its mark——

XXX

SWALE (*stunned*). What is Progress?

WHARFE. Why, the gasometers, those are Progress; the Hogs, they too are Progress; for are they not knocking the very wriggle out of our Roads?

OUSE. In fine, every nasty thing that springs to the mind, every beastly abomination that presses on the soul, every filthy oil that pollutes Aire's once pellucid flood: that, gentle Swale, is Progress.

AIRE. In a word, every dreadful stink that befouls the mouth of Ouse: that, gentle Swale, is Progress.

SWALE. In short, I take it, every horrible chimney that chokes the air of the West Riding.

XXXI

WHARFE. I am sorry to have provoked this. Let us, by all means, retrogress to the story of the unprogressive Potter.

SWALE. Why, as for him, let me tell you, he made more pure progress in five minutes than all your poisonous pioneers put together. For suddenly he was aware of a fissure in the rocks before him, the like of which, in all his explorations, he had never seen before. And being a bold man withal——

AIRE. And hammer?

SWALE. He crawled in, I say, and discovered a long tunnel boring into the heart of the bastion, underneath the very Keep itself. But far from being daunted by the appalling dangers of the quest, he pushed forward into the very navel of that cliff, lured by a faint light, shining remote and afar. How many times he stumbled and how many times he barked his shins or banged his head, or what unheard-of promises of leading a better life, of cobbling a better shoe, he made, as he wriggled onward, I cannot tell you. But at length—and it might have been a minute or it might have been a hundred years—he found himself in a darkling crypt lighted only by a dim red lanthorn. And there for a moment or two he stood stock-still blinking his eyes in the unaccustomed light, while his heart thumped against his side as if it would burst its mortal bars. But presently he began to feel his own man again, and looked round about him; and the first thing he noticed was a table in the middle of the chamber underneath the grave, red flame. And on the table was a great sword and a jewelled horn.

But more wonderful than all these — Arthur and his most faithful knights lay at his feet on the floor, their massive breasts rising and falling in an age-long sleep!

Now what did this Lad of lads do?

What would you all have done?

. . . . .

OUSE. Why, roused them all with a great blast of the horn——

AIRE. Or taken to your heels in a great fright; or been struck dead with a great fear.

WHARFE. Or watched over them until the crack of doom.

XXXII

SWALE. How easy it is to be bold out here on this blessed road with the comfortable sky above us, and the curlews calling. But down there in the womb of the hill, with the black rock and the great Keep on your shoulders!—I tell you this cobbler of ours was a hero of no mean order, whatever the world may say of him; and he had a shrewd head in the bargain. For, he said, here is the place that has eluded the doughtiest and cunningest champions of Christendom: here the very sword Excalibur. . . .

Here Arthur himself; the Rose of Chivalry, and the flower of the Table Round. And I, Potter Thompson, have seen the things. I and none other. But it is my word against the world! Well then, he reasoned, I will take this holy sword and this thrice-blessed horn away with me to Richmond to prove my incredible tale. I will exhibit them in the Market Place at the Cross. And afterwards I will lead a picked company back to this marvellous place, and have Mass sung and leave the rest to God. And so saying, he seized the horn, unsheathed the sword and made to depart. But at that very moment, alack, first one of those prodigious knights—it may have been Gawain or Galahad or Launcelot—I know not—breathed a little more deeply, sighed, turned over on his elbow, so that his armour rattled on the cold stones—and broke the spell. Now, what man among us would not have been stricken dead at such a sound as of the sudden presage of a doom? I tell you again, this cobbler had the courage of ten lions, for he made no more ado but to let fall the sword and the horn with a crash and fly for his life.

OUSE. And saved it?

SWALE. Aye, and saved it too, but not without reproach, for as he ran, a Voice echoed down the long galleries

after him as it has since echoed down the galleries of the years:

> Potter—Potter Thompson,
> If thou hadst either drawn
> The Sword, or blown the Horn,
> Thou'dst been the luckiest man
> That ever yet was born!

There now, you have it to meditate and marvel on; for there is no more to say.

XXXIII

Aire. I hope, Swale, you are not going to ruin such a rousing story by ending it in the middle like a disgusting modern novelist. Let us by all means hear more. Let us hear what became of the picked company that the cobbler—horn or no horn—must assuredly have led back to the grot.

Swale. How stupid; how torpid; how bovine; how sluggish he is!

Ouse. It is the iron in his soul. . . .

Wharfe. None the less, Aire has a right to know the end even though it casts a shadow over the beginning. Nor is he dense or stupid but only determined to probe things to the roots as are all the sceptics of our Riding. That is the difference between us.

Swale, with the simplicity and faith of his people, is content to accept the Revelation and believe. Ouse is so mightily proud of the Revelation that he is at once ready to fight for it to the death. But Aire, who is hard-headed and shrewd, and has had all the magic and the nonsense beaten out of him, is determined to lift the final veil.

XXXIV

Aire. I want a plain answer to a plain question.

Wharfe. And you shall have it, Aire. For the fact is, that when that valiant little cobbler came to tell his tale, he

was laughed at for a fool and a half-wit. That being so, you will not be surprised to hear that when he went back, followed by all the ragtag and bobtail of the town——

SWALE. By'r Lady! I protest against such a vilification——

WHARFE. Well then, when he went back, followed by the gentry and nobility of Richmond, though he scoured the bastion from end to end and walked round and round the hill until all his jeering followers were moithered, not a crack nor a crevice could he find big enough to admit a ferret, nor even a Fool, let alone an Antiquarian. And that was that. But who among us would wonder at that, or let that dim the splendour of his Vision? The time was not ripe: the summons not yet. For myself, I believe that Arthur and his peers could not bear the idea of waking up in such a hoggish world as ours; nor let their Horn be blown in the same air as a Hog's hooter.

AIRE. And for my part, I cannot square this story at all with the dissolution of the soul, the decay of the body, the Particular and the General Judgment.

SWALE. And I tell you, from the first moment I clapped eyes on Richmond, I apprehended Camelot and Avalon and Joyous Gard. . . .

## XXXV

OUSE. Then, if you are so swift at the uptake, perhaps you will tell me what is that little cluster of chimneys and housetops below us in the valley?

SWALE. Why, bless my soul, that is Whaw and Langthwaite in Arkengarthdale; and in a moment you will see Arkle Beck, and Arkle Town, which lies hard by the place called Booze——

OUSE. At last we may booze!

AIRE. To Booze or not to Booze: that is the question!

SWALE. We shall certainly not booze at Booze, since,

as I warned you before, there is no booze to be had there, wherefore I propose to give Booze the cold shoulder.

WHARFE. And yet—had we time I should be loth to pass such a rarity by, for Booze, I think, must be the one dreadful hamlet in all the Shire which does not boast at least one inn. In my own well-barrelled Riding I could show you villages with a church, a farm and a pub, or even with two pubs and no farm, but nothing at all so cold, so cheerless, so publess and so altogether forsaken as this Spartan hermitage, usurping the noble name of Booze.

OUSE. I cannot believe it is real. It is some mocking mirage.

AIRE. It is a snare and an illusion: the creation of some infernal hag o' the broom or some despotic hobman.

SWALE. And I tell you all it is nothing of the kind. It is real: it is earnest—as you shall see when we cross the valley below us and climb up the moor beyond. You will see then, too, that it is perched on the dizzy bastion of the moor where all the walls of the dale go hobnobbing together to its crazy doors. You will see, too, that it has a tipsy look on its sonsy face and that all its chimney-stacks stand pot-valiant together smoking like old bullyrocks. As for ale, who, I should like to ask, could roll barrels up a precipice with no other gantry but those boozy walls? How dare you then abuse Booze?

OUSE. So long as Booze does not boast teetotal views, I am mollified——

SWALE. Why, as for that, it is but a stride to the Red Lion at Langthwaite which has ale and to spare.

AIRE. Then let us push on with all speed, for I warn you now I shall climb no more of your ridges until I have aled and regaled myself.

XXXVI

WHARFE. I hope, Aire, you are not weakening already. I hope—for the sake of our own hospitable Riding—you

are not going to clamour for food. If Swale wishes us to walk the entire breadth of his dale without once inviting us to put our legs under a table, let us walk without a reproachful word.

OUSE. My lands, I must confess, are in the main lowlands compared with the mountainous fells of Swale; yet they have not this lean and hungry look; they are fat and comforting, and full of inns, where a man can appease his appetite. Nevertheless, I do not ask for food or drink. If Swale wishes us to starve, I shall starve: if to thirst, I shall thirst. Nor shall I complain if Famine has desolated his dale——

SWALE. By all my foaming barrels! I am ashamed. I stand rebuked.

ALL. Not at all.

WHARFE. It is only a matter of twelve mountainous miles to Askrigg in Wensleydale, where I daresay we shall be able to procure food—if not to-night, to-morrow. Failing that, it is only another fifteen miles to the White Lion at Cray, in my own dale: over the Stake by Kidstone Fell, where I can promise you a very banquet.

AIRE. And, after all, it is not yet dusk.

OUSE. And we had two pints apiece twenty miles away.

SWALE. Merciful Heaven, defend me in this dreadful hour! Above all, unloosen my tongue and silence these mutinous mouths! Am I a cuckoo that I cannot feed my charge? Am I a niggard that I cannot cram them with every desirable thing? Is my dale to be damned for ever with these abominable slanders? Is there not a flitch at every farm and a feast at every inn? Are there not eggs: is there not cheese—at every cottage by the wayside? And are we not famed the world over for our Apple-Pie? And yet they talk of starving and they hint at Famine!

WHARFE. It was no more than a hint.

XXXVII

AIRE. Let us stand here on this dizzy hillside and survey the green dale below us. Let us count the farms within sight and translate them into flitches; let us number the inns and consider them in the terms of beanfeasts or arvells; and let us tell off the little cottages one by one, and take a mythical slice of bread and cheese in each and all of them.

OUSE. And let us crane our necks and do all in our power to get a glimpse of this uproarious place called Booze, and drain down our mythical meals with a succession of mythical bumpers!

SWALE. Why, now I see you are but jesting with me, and I am ashamed; but I will make amends. For better than wasting time over those visionary victuals, let us stride down at once to a nameless inn I know on the road beyond where I will prove to you in a very practical way that you are on the very brink of the Promised Land.

L

HALF-WAY HOUSE

SCRIBE. And here, my pertinacious Pater, let me implore you to put down this enthralling narrative for a while, and have one with me at this Half-Way House. For, though writing is quite as thirsty a job as walking, reading, alas, is twice as dry and tedious as either. And I have always believed it to be one of the faults of the brothers of my craft that they make so little allowance for the frailty of human nature. They plod on all too persistently from page 1 to page 352 without calling a single halt; so that if a man wants a drink (and for myself I must have twenty-four drinks to swallow a modern novel), he must close the book at some dreadful convulsion and do a violence to the

story. It irks me, too, to watch the chapters follow each other remorselessly from number 1 to number 33 without a single break in the chain until the Grand Climax is reached on the last page but three. No provision whatever appears to be made for natural fatigue or for the laxity of the larynx on the way.

That is why I have numbered my own spirited text a little erratically, so that you will find yourself jumping suddenly from Section xxxvii. to Section l. And your heart will be enormously relieved and lifted up to think that you are so much nearer the End than you imagined, just as on the Road you pass milestone after milestone without noticing them, and are suddenly amazed to find you have covered twelve holy miles without stopping for one pint.

Do you do now, therefore, as I myself intend to do in a moment: put down this fascinating book and gulp a bumper to the glory of those Four Lads who are even at this very moment doing exactly the same thing themselves!

PATER. This is certainly the most sensible thing you have written since you began, and, all in good time, I shall certainly do as you propose. Nevertheless, I cannot be so easily fobbed off as that. And first I want to know——

SCRIBE. I am sorry I did not catch that, but I shall wake up, I hope, for the Thirdly and the Exhortation.

PATER (*bawling*). I say FIRST I want to know what happened to these feckless four when they came out of that nameless inn. Did they fall by the wayside into the ditch or were they deservedly overtaken by the Hogs?

SCRIBE. They are not yet out of the inn, nor, I fear, the wood; but you must know that if ever I am to have their amazing story printed for the everlasting wonder of the world I must compress it into the ridiculous limits of any spineless modern book, otherwise no publisher will win imperishable renown by giving it his Imprimatur. Indeed, when I reflect on the prodigies which are still to be chronicled; when I

think of all that happened to these Lads on the second and third days of their great march; above all, when I meditate on their hair-raising adventures, when they left the solitude of the hills for the Hog-infested main road, my heart misgives me, and even my valiant little pen shakes with fear.

PATER. That being so, let me exhort you to waste no more time in excuses, but rather give me an honest answer to my first question.

SCRIBE. Do you remember the Apple-Pie you had ages ago at the Angel?

PATER. As I hope to be saved!

SCRIBE. And how, when it was set before us, I told that apple-cheeked lass she must have had the recipe from the *York Spy*?

PATER. That was in the days before Holy Church had packed me off into the bush; but I can still conjure up the vision of that particular Pie.

SCRIBE. And I still have the recipe——

PATER. Whisper it as you hope to be saved.

## APPLE-PYE[1]

SCRIBE.

Of all the Delicates which *Brittons* try
To please the Palate, and delight the Eye,
Of all the several Kinds of sumptuous Fare,
There's none that can with *Apple-Pye* compare,
For costly Flavour, or substantial Paste,
For outward Beauty, or for inward Taste.

When first this infant Dish in Fashion came,
The Ingredients were but coarse, and rude the Frame;
As yet unpolish'd in the Modern Arts,
Our Fathers eat Brown Bread instead of Tarts;
Pyes were but indigested Lumps of Dough,
Till Time and just Expence improv'd 'em so.

[1] From *The Northern Atlantis or York Spy*.

King *Col* (as Ancient *British* Annals tell),
Renown'd for Fiddling and for Eating well,
Pippins in homely Cakes with Honey Stew'd,
Just as he Bak'd (the Proverb says) he Brew'd.
Their great Art succeeding Princes show'd,
And Modell'd Paste into a neater Mode;
Invention now grew lively, Palate nice,
And Sugar pointed out the way to Spice.

But here for Ages unimprov'd we stood,
And Apple-Pye was still but homely food;
When God-like *Edgar*, of the *Saxon* Line,
Polite of Taste, and studious to refine,
In the Desert perfuming Quinces cast,
And perfected with Cream the rich Repast.
Hence we proceed the outward parts to trim,
With Crinckumcranks adorn the Polish'd Brim;
And each fresh Pye the pleas'd Spectator greets
With Virgin Fancies, and with new Conceits.

Dear *Nelly*, learn with Care the Pastry Art,
And mind the easie Precepts I impart,
Draw out your Dough elaborately thin,
And cease not to fatigue your Rowling-pin;
Of Eggs and Butter see you mix enough,
For then the Paste will swell into a Puff,
Which will in crimpling Sounds your Praise report,
And Eat, as Housewives speak, exceeding short.
Rang'd in thick order let your Quinces lye,
They give a charming Relish to the Pye:
If you are wise, you'll not Brown Sugar slight,
The Browner, if I form my Judgment right,
A deep Vermillion Tincture will dispence,
And make your Pippin Redder than the Quince.

When this is done, there will be wanting still
The just Reserve of Cloves and Candied Peel;
Nor can I blame you, if a Drop you take
Of Orange-water for perfuming sake.

But here, the nicety of Art is such,
There must not be too little, nor too much;
If with Discretion you these Costs employ,
They quicken Appetite, if not, they cloy.

Next in your Mind, this Maxim firmly root,
Never o'ercharge your Pye with costly Fruit:
Oft let your Bodkin through the Lid be sent,
To give the kind Imprison'd Treasure vent;
Lest the fomenting Liquor closely prest,
Insensibly by constant fretting waste,
And o'er inform the Tenement of Paste.

To chuse your Baker, think and think again;
(You'll scarce one honest Baker find in ten)
Adust and bruis'd I've often seen a Pye,
In rich Disguise and costly Ruin lie;
While pensive Crust beheld its form oe'rthrown,
Exhausted Apples griev'd, their Moisture flown,
And Sirrups from the sides ran trickling down.

O be not, be not tempted, lovely *Nell*,
While the hot-piping Odours strongly smell,
While the delicious Fume creates a Gust,
To lick th' o'erflowing Juice, or bite the Crust.

You'll rather stay (if my advice may rule)
Until the Hot's corrected by the Cool;
Till you've infus'd the luscious store of Cream,
And chang'd the Purple for a Silver stream;
Till that smooth Viand its mild force produce,
And give a softness to the tartar Juice.

Then shalt thou pleased the Noble Fabrick view,
And have a Slice into the Bargain to;
Honour and Fame alike we will partake,
So well I'll Eat what you so richly Make.

PATER. But as for me, I must needs wait until I get to Paradise to eat such generous food!

SCRIBE. Meantime, I will send such a pie out to you by the very next mail: not, indeed, to eat, for a pie of that nature is past its prime the moment it crosses the border—let alone the sea; and should, indeed, be carved and swallowed within sight and odour of its native oven. But I will send it to be preserved in a glass museum for the edification and (within the limits of the Canon Law) worship of the heathen.

PATER. They have idols enough and to spare, and Heaven

forfend that I should be the instigator of a new heresy. You would be better employed in telling me what has become of those Lost Lads.

SCRIBE. Not lost, thanks be, but gone before. For they had no sooner entered the inn than they were greeted by the odour of just such a pie themselves: it being, as Swale very well knew, a baking day in those parts. And when they had thoroughly regaled themselves with cold beef and pickles, and before they had paid homage to a fat, full-bellied home-made cheese, set up on a pedestal like any little God or Alderman, they were all of them bewitched, enraptured and exalted by the sight of that same glorious Creation widening on their view. Modesty forbids me detailing the dimensions of the wedge which each one of them hacked from it and proceeded to devour. Swale, indeed, was so affected by the sight as to stand up immediately to deliver an oration in its praise as long and complicated as a Pindaric Ode, but Wharfe and Ouse and Aire were too busy munching pie to attempt to stop him. The long and short of it was that even before the peaceful cheese had been called upon, all their weariness had left them and Swale was hard put to it to prevent them making a night of it. For first Ouse stood up and insisted on singing one of his own songs there and then; exactly suited, so he said, to such an inn and such a pie. Which was like his impudence, for—except that it went to a jolly tune—I cannot imagine a worse injustice to such a noble dish.

PATER. Let me hear it.

SCRIBE. Muffle your ear-drums!

LI

THE SONG OF OUSE: THE PINEBERRY INN

The time it was six of the clock and wild, very
  And merrily flapped the inn-sign,
And the place was the roadway beside the Pineberry,
  I thought it were wisdom to dine.

ALL.

*I thought it were wisdom to dine.*

I enter'd the parlour so spacious and cosy,
The pewter like star-light did shine;
And the table was laid and the landlord so cheery,
Not the sort that would see a man pine!

ALL.

*Not the sort that would see a man pine!*

Come, Landlord! said I, bring me victuals and gravy
And bring me the shank of a Swine!
He brought them to me, they were tasty and sav'ry,
And the lid of his Pie was divine!

ALL.

*And the lid of his Pie was divine!*

I ate for an hour and tho' I'm no critic
I swear that the fare it was fine:
But, Landlord, said I, tho' I want for no physic
I declare I'd be better for wine.

ALL.

*I declare I'd be better for wine!*

The time, says the clock, that ticks loudly and merry
It wants but a minute to nine
And the place 'tis the parlour within the Pineberry,
Was ever the like of this wine?

ALL.

*Was ever the like of this wine?*

LII

SCRIBE. And entirely on his own initiative, Aire stood up, bowed, and bawled one of his own equally mellifluous songs:

THE SONG OF AIRE: "OLD RAGGALDS' INN"

Now, here's to the Inn with the rollicking name
And the stiffest of Sack and the fattest of game!
O here's to the Inn that is hoary with fame—
Old Raggalds'! Old Raggalds'!

And where be this Inn and O where can it stand?
Why it stands on my moors and its Stingo is grand;
For it clings to the heart like a clasp of the hand—
At Raggalds'! Old Raggalds'!

You can't see the ceiling; it's one mighty flitch!
And the oak's from the bog and it's blacker than pitch:
And the cellars are deep and the barrels full rich—
At Raggalds'! Old Raggalds'!

And who be the landlord: be he jocund or wroth?
And be he a rascal or scoundrel or both?
Why *Coggan's* a man that will keep to his troth—
Old Coggan! Of Raggalds'!

Then fill up the glasses and give us a toast
In season and reason without any boast.
O I'll give the toast, quoth the jovial host—
'Tis Raggalds'! Old Raggalds'!

ALL.

So here's to the Inn with the rollicking name,
And the stiffest of Sack and the fattest of game!
O here's to the Inn that is hoary with fame—
Old Raggalds'! Old Raggalds'.

SCRIBE. Whereupon Wharfe, not to be outdone——

PATER. What, Wharfe too! I cannot believe that he also helped to swell this inebriated choir. I have a high opinion of Wharfe, and I am sure—

SCRIBE. That, indeed, was the whole point of his particular inn; that it was remarkably high and (in a manner of speak-

ing) dry. But not, thank God, in any nasty, stingy shut-the-door-in-a-man's-face kind of way. On the contrary—but let him sing his own song.

LIII

THE SONG OF WHARFE: "THE WITHINS' INN"

The Withins' Inn stands high and dry
Atop o' the moor!
The gudeman boasts of Ale and Pie,
Of that be sure!
And I can vouch for them both, I trow,
For many a time o' nights, I vow,
I ate and I supp'd with him, and now
I give him his due!

And many a tale can he tell
O' nights by the fire:
Of stirring deeds by moor and fell
By his gurt grandsire.
The moors they roll by the Withins' doors,
The howling wind round the chimneys roars,
The screaming lapwing now swoops and soars
Eerily nigh!

A lonely inn, the Withins' Inn
Atop o' the moor!
And O for the joy of a pint within
Its oaken door!
To hark to tales of Kit Metcalf's men
And desperate rides up North again
And fights o' nights: and carousing when
The game was o'er!

Inn among inns: O Withins' Inn
Atop o' the moor!
Thank your kind stars if you land in
And bolt the door!
The heather blooms by the very walls,
The horses champ in the stable stalls,
The ale is grand—and it never palls;
Let the rain pour!

So here's my great glass to the Withins' Inn,
A remarkable Inn: a princely inn!
And here's to the men in uproarious din,
Until ale ran short, they didn't give in
And never pass'd by, but stept within
For a tankard of Old and a nipperkin
At this Inn among inns, this Withins' Inn
Atop o' the moor!

LIV

SCRIBE. So thunderous was the applause that Wharfe was obliged to give an encore—'—while his companions in arms replenished their tankards.

PATER. A cant excuse!

SCRIBE. And suddenly remembering his unhappy experiences in the South, he gave vent to the following impromptu:

THE MALEDICTION OF WHARFE

When I left Thingummy County
I loos'd my soilèd shoon
And shook the foul dust from me
Not an hour too soon:
The pigs of Thingummy County
I like them very well:
The inns of Thingummy County
Have an evil smell:
Sweet maids of Thingummy County
Are seldom to be seen:
The vixens who sell whisky
Maids can ne'er have been.

. . . .

I stepp'd into a Thingummy inn
And ask'd a pint of ale,
A Marchioness in Bombazine
Said 'twas not for sale:
And when I begg'd her pardon
And pointed to the sign,

She said I was a hard 'un
And dipp'd her tongue in brine:
The ale of Thingummy County
My lips did never pass
And lemonade shall drown me
Before I drink a glass.

The Thingummy Bonifaces
They are a surly brood,
They pull hostile grimaces,
They are uncommon rude:
They keep State Regulations
And like to slam the door:
They treat their precious patrons
As they would treat a boor:
The Thingummy Bonifaces
They are a poisoned crew,
And each of them disgraces
The Order of the Brew.

LV

PATER. I protest I do not like that spirit of Wharfe's song at all.

SCRIBE. Let us hear what Wharfe has to say to that, for Swale has at last persuaded those four Blades to step out into the night and climb over Reeth Moor, past Bouldershaw Ho and Brownsey, to his own dale; and Wharfe is telling them his adventures in the South as they stride valiantly over the brow. But whether they will ever reach it this night my heart misgives me, for dusk is already veiling the distant heights and the wind is wuthering. . . .

LVI

OUSE. What? You played truant to your Shire! And yet you would have us all believe your own dale to be the *Janua Coeli.*

WHARFE. Even so, I am a great believer in foreign travel, for until a man has done the tour of the world how can he satisfy himself of the supreme glory of his own beloved lands?

OUSE. So say all canting sceptics and infidels, and they will certainly burn for it. But as for me, my faith is sufficient.

WHARFE. Nevertheless it is good for us all, now and again, to estrange ourselves from our own gracious lands, and set foot on alien soil and break—if that be possible—alien bread. . . . How else can a man stand up on his legs in a company of grinning, leering and swaggering foreigners, and give them the lie direct? A man might eat Yorkshire Pudding and Apple-Pie every day of his life, as I am proud to do; he might know in his heart that no foreign pudding and pie, however cunningly or messily compounded, could ever hope to challenge, let alone excel them in richness, in savour, in flavour, in gust: yet not until he has doggedly set his teeth into their own puffy cakes and cracknels can he say with that calm assurance and steadfast conviction that come of bitter experience: There is no Pudding like unto our Pudding, and no Pie like unto our Apple-Pie. So it is with lesser things: with Mountains, with Rivers, with Moors, with Meadows, with Lads and Lasses.

AIRE. In short, with every conceivable thing, as you said before——

WHARFE. Broadly speaking, with every conceivable thing, as I said before. But especially with Ale. And it was Ale that first lured me southward. First one southern poet and then another began to sing of the remarkable swipes that were only to be tasted, so they said, within the confines of their little county, and only to be found, *in excelsis*, within the parlour of one little inn. Whereupon, I set out on foot like Blind Jack Metcalfe—but with only half his foresight—to satisfy myself of the truth or falsity of their tall claims. And though I strode along at a great pace—a little goaded by their pretensions—and reached their flat little county

all too soon, it would take too long to tell you of all the insolences offered to me in the name of inhospitality on the way. For one thing, I discovered (not a little to my surprise) that ours is the only county in the country where a man can step into an inn at any time of any day of the week and be assured of a hearty meal without causing a great hullabaloo, and being scowled out of countenance in the bargain. In spite of which I persevered to the end, promising myself a banquet and a half when I arrived at that prize inn which was my goal. For, I argued, when they see my dusty boots, and when I show them my honest staff and tell them my story, they will broach their best barrels, hack up their fattest fowl, and bring out their most valiant victuals to send me away with a good conceit of themselves and their kitchens.

SWALE. And it came to pass?

WHARFE. As you shall hear.—For when I entered that forsaken place, trembling with anticipation, and yet confident in my heart that nothing they could offer me could do justice to my enormous thirst and appetite: I say when I entered at eleven o'clock of a fine morning—I was refused both bite and sup, and scowled at like a strange animal to boot.

AIRE. But in the name of common sense and justice, why? Was it that, in the excess of your desire or the extremity of your fatigue, you had omitted to wash your dreadful face and comb your wild hair and shave your rude beard?

WHARFE. It was for none of these things, insolent Aire: for I had taken the precaution of plunging that very morning into a modest little rivulet I found there, and pruning myself as zealously as one of our own Bessy Duckers, before presenting myself before them. No, it was merely the rebuff direct for calling for swipes at that illegal hour. The best thing I could do, they said, was to kick my heels outside, or, better still, climb a little hill called Chanctonbury (which is the only little eminence they boast in these parts), and

come back in another two hours when I might have a drink if I cared. But no victuals; since they did not cater (I think that was the word) for chance-callers.

Ouse. And serve you right for going.

Wharfe. No doubt it did, but I came back on the fastest express I could find, for I could not bear to walk over their smooth roads again; let alone think out new curses for their barren inns.

LVII

Swale. How dreadful will be their fate! How hard it will go with them in the inevitable end, when they come to cross Whinny Moor at last, and reach the Brig o' Dread!

Aire. I hope, Swale, this is not that fearful moor, for I am not prepared!

Swale. Who knows where it lies or when the night falls?

Ouse. And why should we be afeared? For, though we have failed in many things, at least we have all, I hope, shown charity. And for my part, when the time comes I shall not shrink.

Wharfe. How splendid it would be to go like this, we four together, over the desolate moor to that last Brig! But whether this be the place or another, my soul tells me it will be such a moor as this on some yet wilder night when we shall make the last journey—alone.

Swale. Let us chant that immemorial song of ours as we stride onward now to prepare ourselves for the end.

Aire. But let it be the old Catholic version that affords hope for a man in that extreme hour.

Swale. I will sing it as all my forelders have sung it before me; and let those who fear the peril mend their parlous ways.

LVIII

SCRIBE. *The night has fallen as Swale sings and only the shadowy silhouette of the moors is visible. . . . Immediately before them the path straggles over a darkling ghyll.*

PATER. And what is the name of this dread song?

SCRIBE. It is not so much a song as a croon, and our folk call it the "Cleveland Lyke-Wake Dirge."

SWALE.

(*Softly*) This ya neet, this ya neet,
Ivvery neet an' all;
Fire an' fleet an' can'le leet,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

When thoo frae hence away art pass'd,
Ivvery neet an' all;
To Whinny-moor thoo cooms at last,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Stoutly*) If ivver thoo gav' owther hosen or shoon,
Ivvery neet an' all;
Clap thee doon an' put 'em on,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Menacingly*) But if hosen or shoon thoo nivver gav nean,
Ivvery neet an' all;
T' whinnies'll prick thee sair to t' bean,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Fearfully*) Frae Whinny-moor when thoo mayst pass,
Ivvery neet an' all;
To t' Brig o' Dreead thoo'll coom at last,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

If iver thoo gav o' thy siller an' gowd,
Ivvery neet an' all;
At t' Brig o' Dreead thoo'll find foothod,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Defiantly*) Bud if siller an' gowd thoo nivver gav nean,
Ivvery neet an' all;
Thoo'll doon doon tumle towards Hell fleames,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Hopefully*) Frae t' Brig o' Dreead when thoo mayst pass,
Ivvery neet an' all;
To Purgatory fire thoo'll coom at last,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

If ivver thoo gav owther bite or sup,
Ivvery neet an' all;
T' fleams'll nivver catch thee up,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Scornfully*) Bud if bite or sup thoo nivver gav nean,
Ivvery neet an' all;
T' fleames'll bon thee sair to t' bean
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

(*Softly*) This ya neet, this ya neet,
Ivvery neet an' all;
Fire an' fleet an' can'le leet,
An' Christ tak up thy saul.

Ouse. So be it, Swale, and let us all take heart of grace; for—terrible as this song must be to all stony-hearted churls —and especially to all such as are blasted by inhospitality, nevertheless, it cheers me like an Absolution.

Wharfe. You say right, Ouse; for to all who have loved the moors and the dales and the lonely places; to all such as have trodden the Road and opened hand and heart to wayfaring fellows, it sounds like a trumpet-blast from the battlements of heaven. None the less, it behoves us not to brag, for we are still far from that Inn whence we must set forth alone!

Aire. I hope so, indeed. Nor are we even yet within sight of that blessed inn which I have been straining my eyes to see for the last three miles! How much longer, I want to

know, are we to go traipsin' about this moor and bruising our feet on boulders; how much longer are we to wander, like lost souls, in the dark?

OUSE. He will certainly burn——

SWALE. Why, it seems to me, Aire, that the longer I keep you walking over our scourging flints, the shorter will be your punishment in Purgatory. And did I not promise you at the beginning, when you were so full of bounce and beer, that I should yet make you cry out for mercy? Even so, I will not be too hard on you for we have thirty or possibly forty mountainous miles to travel to-morrow——

WHARFE. Which is Easter Day, praise be God!

SWALE. When we must all be up early to see the sun dance, for that is a common sight and custom in my dale.

OUSE. And hear Mass before we breakfast!

AIRE. Then by all the prophets and apostles let us find a Christian house or an inn right now: or, failing that, a shippon—where we may lie down and sleep; or else strange things will surely befall.

. . . . . .

SWALE. *Softly, Aire! And silence all! For out of the valley it comes like the murmur of choirs. Into the night it ascends like the voices of the shepherds on the Hill. Down from the mountains it comes swirling and swaling, and we are within hail.* . . .

OUSE. Why, this must be his stripling river at last.

AIRE. *Deo Gratias!*

SWALE. For those who are faint with weariness, there is an inn, and though it is long passed the hour, I will rouse them and they will shelter you. For those who are cold, there is fire; for those who are hungry, food; for those who thirst, drink and to spare. But for my part, who am neither tired, nor hungry, nor parched, nor cold: but rather mar-

vellously renewed and aflame, I will make my bed here in the ling within sight and sound of my own and waken you betimes in the morning——

Ouse. Why, I for one will join you——

Wharfe. And I, too—so long as we do not sleep under the sign of Aquarius, which hath an evil influence on the legs, so I am told.

Aire. But supposing——

Ouse. And we will squeeze Aire between us and sit on him to keep him warm.

LIX

Pater. I hope they did not go to sleep like Hogs in a ditch, without saying their night prayers.

Scribe. Not at all, for Swale recited the Five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary for their safe conduct; and Wharfe and Ouse responded like full-fledged Friars.

Pater. And Aire?

Scribe. Aching in every limb, skinned at heel, blistered on three toes, heavy of head and heart, weary and sleepy-eyed, and withal thoroughly cantankerous and stupid, Aire appropriated to himself the most sheltered nook in the sunken bed of ling which Swale had carefully chosen, and the better part of the ground-sheet they had spread for all. Then, curling himself up into a kind of monstrous Manx Legs, with his elbows in Ouse's broad back and his spindle-shanks dangerously near Wharfe's chin, he muttered to himself that brief, yet all-embracing prayer of ours, which you know well:

*Thro' my top to my toe*
*Manus tuas commendo!*

Having said which (and he did well to remember his toes) he fell promptly to snoring, what time Swale chanted his Pater-

nosters and Aves. And I think you might do worse than give him and all of them your blessing; for who knows but it may snow before the night is over?

PATER. God have mercy on their souls.

SCRIBE. Why that is but a scurvy ration.

PATER. *Indulgentiam, absolutionem, et remissionem, peccatorum eorum, tribuat eis omnipotens et misericors Dominus!*

SCRIBE. *Amen.*

# BOOK III

## EASTER DAY

I

SWALE (*singing*). *Haec ! Haec dies quam fecit Dominus exultemus et laetemur in ea !*

OUSE. *Exultemus et laetemur in ea !*

SWALE. In spite of which he still sleeps and snores.

OUSE. In form and feature, how like a Hog!

WHARFE. Let us rouse him before he chokes. (*Kicks Aire.*)

AIRE. Wharramarra?

SWALE. Alleluia.

AIRE. *Et cum spiritu tuo.*

OUSE. At last he moves: his torpid brain begins to function and his nasty mouth closes.

AIRE (*roused*). Why, what is all this?

SWALE. Six o'clock of an Easter Morning, Lig-a-bed. That is all. A rare morning for a swim in my river before we betake ourselves to the Road again.

AIRE. For myself, I shall be content to wash in a basin or, failing that, a piggin. And then to breakfast with all possible speed.

SWALE. I know a pool.

OUSE. A ducking-pool?

SWALE. Such a pool as I dare say none of you has ever dreamed of.

AIRE. I have been dreaming of a fat woman bending over a hob and stirring up porridge with a thorble. No sooner was the porridge ladled into a bowl and smothered with cream and treacle than she set about frying the most crackling panful of gammon rashers and eggs that I ever clapped eyes on. Immediately that was served she melted into batter, or butter, or cheese. I forget which.

WHARFE. Why, after such a meal as that, then, you will be the best prepared of all to breast the flood, so let us follow Swale without further parley, lest we be late for Mass afterwards.

SWALE. I am sorry about that.

OUSE. About what, honest Swale?

SWALE. About Mass.

WHARFE. This is strange talk for Easter Day.

AIRE. Let us proceed to church without more ado, and postpone this swimming until the sun begins to dance.

SWALE. Why, the fact is, there is no church hereabouts at all; at least no Catholic church. That is the prime reason why I was so eager to make that ten miles' detour to Richmond, where our nearest little church lies.

WHARFE. Surely, Swale, there is a chapel somewhere within marching distance of this corner of your dale?

SWALE. Not one——

OUSE. Am I to understand we cannot hear Mass at all on this day of days?

AIRE. Had I known this I should never have left my own holy Riding, for there we have churches and to spare.

WHARFE. Can we not, Swale, by forced marching, win our way to a church and hear Mass, even at the cost of exhaustion?

SWALE. How I hate to say no! In the heart of my dale and in the Cleveland hills, the Faith is wellnigh as strong to-day as in the glorious days of old. Even in the lonely upland villages like Ugthorpe and Egton Bridge, Rosedale and Osmotherley, we have our little church and schools; but here, in the mountains, it is not so quick, and you may walk for endless miles and peep into a score of venerable buildings without finding the still red flame.

WHARFE. That is a great pity and a great sorrow to us all, but we cannot blame you for it. After all, did we not set out as crusaders and talk loudly of waving our mystical banners

on the hills? It behoves us all to take note of this sad state of things in the high dales, and go back to our Bishops with a great lamenting. Let us, therefore, as we stride on, measure the miles between one church and another, and decide where chapels and chantries are wanted: and act accordingly.

SWALE. Even in your own dale, Wharfe——

WHARFE. Yes, yes, I know. Even in the higher reaches of my own dale there is a lamentable lack of altars. The Churches, and the Abbeys, and the Priories, are there, but they are in the possession of the Office of Works, or some other Government Body. . . .

OUSE. This state of things cannot go on. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

WHARFE. The Faith remains and is renewed like the eagle. And like the eagle it will swoop down again. Only the other week Mass was said again in a great inn at Grassington, and will be said again every month in the year.

AIRE. In the meantime I am cold and hungry.

SWALE. So are my people cold and hungry for the immortal Food.

WHARFE. Those sad little chapels that we pass by——

OUSE. Which are always closed——

SWALE. And yet sometimes when you pass them of a Sunday evening you will hear them singing one of our own hymns so that your heart dances with joy and hope, for it is like the echo of their forelders in the churchyard.

WHARFE. But afterwards you will hear a voice: a strange voice, in an unnatural key, rising and falling like a wailing wind.

OUSE. How is it that our priests are the only men who can stand up in a pulpit and talk naturally, and pray and preach with no falsetto?

WHARFE. Why I have heard say the falsetto came into fashion with the Persecution.

AIRE. No doubt it did: no doubt all you say is true, yet I

confess I have no stomach for it at this hour of the day: on this day of all days.

SWALE. Let us then all plunge into my crystal pool and be rejuvenated. And afterwards we will each say our morning prayers in our own way: and then I will lead you to an inn where you will want to stay all morning munching our delicious food. Only let me warn you in advance that the miles we walked yesterday were as child's-play to the miles we shall have to walk to-day.

AIRE. How he brags!

OUSE. Look to your toes.

SWALE. Ever since Paulinus baptised the Ten Thousand in my river, it has been blessed above all the rivers of the kingdom. In short, it will not be the first time it has wrought a miracle. Dive, Aire, and be saved!

II

SCRIBE. I wish you could have seen them plunging into that silver pool; I wish you could have seen first Swale, then Ouse, then Wharfe—and last of all, Aire—hurl himself into the icy water. Here, indeed, was a sight for the gods and, above all, for the geographers. Here were Wharfe, Ouse and Aire tumbling into Swale when by all the maps ever carefully drawn to scale, Swale, Wharfe and Aire should have been tumbling one after the other into Ouse. I wish, I say, you could have seen this wild convulsion of Nature!

PATER. I wish——

SCRIBE. I wish you could have seen Aire capering about like any eel, and Ouse splashing round and round like any chub, and Wharfe leaping and curveting like any trout, and Swale riding his own river like any Triton.

PATER. I wish——

SCRIBE. I wish you could have seen the sun dancing on

the waters, over the waters and under the waters as it undoubtedly did. I wish you could have seen these four Lads —or rather let us call them for the nonce deities.

PATER. That is a pagan thought——

SCRIBE. I say I wish you could have seen them jump out one after the other (and Aire an easy first), and rub, thump, and pummel themselves on the bank.

PATER. I hope they were decently clad——

SCRIBE. Why, all the world was still sleeping, for it was Sunday morning. I say—and a pest on these interruptions! —I wish you could have seen them sit down and thwack the soles of their feet as if with flails—all, that is, except Aire, who looked a little dubiously at his two heels. I wish you could have heard them roaring out to the morning the *Lauda Sion* and the *Victimae Paschali Laudes*——

PATER. Why, yes, I wish——

SCRIBE. I wish you could have seen them sitting in the Punchbowle Inn, making short work of a prodigious bowl of porridge, not to speak of an amazing succession of shives of bread, rashers of ham, mashes of tea, sausages, rosy Pace eggs (which the hares had been laying), havercakes, marmalade, jam and cheese——

PATER. Why, this is the sin of gluttony indeed!

SCRIBE. I say I wish you could have seen them strapping on their packs and setting forth again like giants renewed, or rather like no giants that were ever seen before. I wish——

PATER. I wish they had not missed Mass.

SCRIBE. I wish you would not rake up that painful disappointment which they will certainly rue all the day. Even more, I wish I had time to tell you all the vows they made as they stepped out again on to the Road with their faces to the mountains and the sun at their backs. I wish I could stop to tell you how the primroses laughed with them as they strode forward singing. I wish I could stop to tell you a thousand things more—especially the legends about

Crackpot and Bloody Vale—but already they are miles ahead, and how can I hope to overtake them with my little legs unless indeed I begin to scoot like a Hog on the war-path——

PATER. I wish you would end this rigmarole of wishes.

SCRIBE. I wish their heels were not endued with the immortal oils.

Howbeit, here they are at last, striding valiantly towards Gunnerside; and Swale in flood.

III

SWALE. Proud, I say, as I am of my dale at this point, and, indeed, at any point of my impetuous river's career, none the less, I do not hold with this sudden bursting in upon it from the hills. It is like opening a book haphazard and reading it backwards way.

AIRE. I am all for that way of opening and reading books, especially modern books. Indeed, I will go so far as to say it is the only way I can endure them.

SWALE. I hope, Aire, you are not insinuating——

AIRE. Not at all.

OUSE. And even if he were, it would make no difference; for we are all of us agreed and amazed at the beauty encompassing us at this present moment.

SWALE. Oh, but wait! but wait! Wait until we round the bend. Wait until the great green hills burst upon you; wait until we pass Muker and are suddenly hemmed in by toppling mountains; wait until you see Kisdon and Keld.

WHARFE. But we are not going to Keld, artful Swale, as you know very well.

SWALE. Not to drink a pint at the jolly Cat-Hole? Mind, I do not ask you to struggle on as far as that modest little inn of ours at Tanhill—the highest in all England—lest the fierce pull up Silver Hill and beyond should burst

Aire's bellows. But at least let me lead you all into that same Cat-Hole which is so justly famous throughout the length and breadth of this land; and known even to such remote peoples as Tynesiders, Wearsiders and Hamsiders generally. As for Anglers—that strange tribe—so marvellous is the atmosphere and ale within, that I have heard tell of trout putting on ten pounds there between sun-up and sundown.—Indeed, I say so famous is this tiny inn that once upon a time when a Total Eclipse was confidently expected ten thousand Astronomers tottered up to its doors at five o'clock in the morning more dead than alive, and were immediately revived by the mere odour of the frying rashers.

AIRE. What stuff is this?

SWALE. At least I say, let me lead you, Aire, to this delectable inn that stands, pot-valiant, facing the green shoulder of Kisdon and beckoning all true travellers who plod up from Thwaite to step over its hospitable threshold and accept of its bounty. At least let me show you a real groaning table, a real barrel of ale and a real hearty welcome—not to speak of a real feather bed! True, you would be made so comfortable there that you would never want to leave it again, though to warn you of the peril, they have installed a wild alarm clock that beats the hours at break-neck speed like a little hog in a great hurry. Indeed, some say that they captured a mad hogget there and bewitched and imprisoned him in the works for this purpose. Be that as it may, call we all must—or I dare not show my face there again.

WHARFE. Not this time, alas. On the contrary, we are turning sharply to the south by way of the Pass of Butter-tubs, and so to Hardrow and Hawes.

SWALE. Certainly you will regret it all the rest of your days. For my dale, I say, is like a noble book, writ by a master hand, and my tempestuous river runs through it like an

intricate plot, so that properly to understand my story you should begin not here or there at random, but at the very beginning up in the far solitudes of Water Crag by Nine Standards Rigg, exploring each little stripling ghyll in turn —and there are scores of them like subsidiary branches of the Family Tree—so as to get thoroughly soaked and absorbed in the atmosphere of the story. Only when you have done this, should you begin the great tale itself; and the only way to do that is to walk with a steady tread from one end of it to the other.

Ouse. By all the Prophets and Preachers, he would have us spend the rest of our lives exploring and adoring, not to speak of measuring and treasuring his little dale!

Aire. Let us leave him here to rhapsodise alone while we push south.

Wharfe. Nevertheless, I can sympathise with Swale, and I should have been surprised had he not made a last stand in favour of his own remote cradle. That does not alter the fact that we turn south.

Swale. Why, then, I give way with what grace I may, and make the best of a bad job.

Ouse. I hope you are not going to sulk.

Swale. On the contrary. I will leave that to you, for it has always seemed to me that you sulk rather than sing your way through your own corner of the Shire.

Ouse. Then I shall surely make you howl through yours. Defend yourself as best you can, for I shall certainly flatten you out.

Wharfe. By my boots and staff! this is not nice. This comes of missing Mass, and will not do at all.

Swale. I crave pardon, Wharfe, if I have spoken too bluntly. And no doubt I am in the wrong since my acquaintance with Ouse is strictly limited.

Ouse. To what?

Swale. To the lowlands below Myton where my own

swift flood, realising that there are no more craggy valleys to conquer; no more colossal boulders to gouge away; no more fearsome falls to leap; no more ravines to rend and rive —meets the noble Ure, who is also of much the same way of thinking: and, in short, where they embrace each other —and the sluggish Ouse is born. Only a few sad thorns and willows mark the spot—and a few melancholy anglers sit there fishing for hours on end for gudgeon and the like small fry.

Ouse. By my soul, this is a strange apology, indeed! This is insolence, if you please; this is buncombe, if you like!

By my beeves and fatlings; by my yows and gimmers; by my ganders and geslings; by my firstlings and lastlings; by my plews and plewlands; by my hoes and harrows; by my beans and barley; by my wheat and oats; by my cabbages and turnips; by my plums and apples; by my flicks and flax; by my hips and haws; by my fat pastures; by my vasty wolds; by my huge span; by my age and weariness; by my equanimity and longanimity; by my fecundity; by my pike and roach and dace and chub; by my great cod; by——

Wharfe. Hold! lest you flow into the North Sea and begin to number all the monsters of the deep; all the whales and narwhales; all the porpoises and cuttle fish and all the sharks. Hold, I say, and let us put an end to this barging and beldering, and behave ourselves like honest Lads. For myself, I think Ouse is to be excused in this and Swale much to be blamed. Indeed, ever since Swale set foot in his own lands he has been getting out of hand; and the nearer he gets to his beginnings the wilder he talks.

Swale. Naturally.

Wharfe. None the less, Swale, let me tell you once and for all that we cannot have you match your speech to your surroundings, or we shall all leave you to roar alone. Behave yourself like the jolly little river we know you to be and do not ape an ocean. Let us for a moment consider the case of

Ouse. Granted that he has not your recklessness and spate, even so, we must all acknowledge him to be our master; for just as your own tempestuous little ghylls come tumbling down the fellsides to pay tribute to you, so do we all at the appointed time and place pour ourselves forth into the welcoming arms of our great Ouse. First Swale and Ure unite to pay homage, then Nidd, then Foss, then myself, then Derwent—after a wild youth—then Aire.

Aire. But not until Calder has bowed to me——

Wharfe. Then Don—think what a noble admixture of blood is all this! Indeed, so wonderful is Ouse and so far-famed, that even the alien Trent cannot rest until it has rushed into his arms. And even then the full tale is not told, for finally the little Foulness and the little Hull come toddling to his side and are lost in his wide embrace. As to his actual beginning and end: all we can say is that he does begin and is suddenly called Ouse, and does end, and is suddenly called Humber.

Aire. Why, I have always understood that that small and insignificant little Ouse which trickles down by Ouseburn, below Boroughbridge, is the only begetter of this flood.

Wharfe. Let us all accept the mystery and put an end to dispute and look around us; for it seems to me that the world is at last awake.

Ouse. But not half so wide-awake as I am; and I protest, though a patient and long-suffering man, that I will no longer listen in silence to these slurs on my river and my Riding.

Wharfe. Nobody, Ouse, has ever suspected you of silence, but if you bawl like that they will certainly mistake you for a raging animal bellowing in pain and clap a ring through your nose and a halter round your fat neck.

Swale. And fasten you up in a bullgarth, lest you ruin the rest of the herd.

AIRE. And fell you with cleaver and hack you up in great lumps for fattening the common stock.

OUSE. And how enormous would be their gain! And how much these poor starvelings need such fattening food!

SWALE. Hulk, Dredger, Porpoise, Whale!

WHARFE. Hold! for if I mistake not, these are not nice compliments for Easter Day.

OUSE. All my life I have fought to keep the peace of a Sunday morning, and never before have I used my fists on Easter Day; but no man can call me a hulk or a dredger, nor a porpoise, nor a whale, and still stand up on his legs and breathe.

SWALE. No man has ever loaded my pure-bred cattle with such opprobrium and lived.

WHARFE. And again, I say: this comes of missing Mass, for which you, Swale, are largely to blame.

SWALE. What monstrous calumny is this?

WHARFE. Sober Truth is not calumny. And the Truth is that had you long ago bawled for a church in these parts half so lustily as Ouse, we should not have fallen into such vulgar abuse.—As it is, I say Ouse is the least to blame, and for the sake of peace I would have you all give him a chance to say what he has to say about his own lands, and put an end to this brawling.

SWALE. I hope he will, at least, wait until we are clear of my own dales before belauding his own. . . . Courtesy demands it.

WHARFE. You forget, Swale, that we have already devoted half a day and night to your lands, and that we shall be hard put to it to gain the uttermost boundary before eventide. You forget, too, that the moment we reach the divide we set foot in my own lands, where my own tale shall be told, unless, indeed, you desire to rhapsodise about your Riding for three whole days and nights on end?

AIRE. God forbid! for it is my earnest intention to talk

for twelve hours at a stretch about the sources of my own river; and to cram into the twelve remaining hours all the marvels that lie between Malham Cove and Airmyn.

Ouse. I should be sorry, Aire, to listen to such a dirge as that; and if only for the sake of good example I will wager to cram into the next half-hour's march as much of my own story as shall turn all you green with jealousy.

Wharfe. Begin then.

IV

Ouse. Let me first of all and once and for all squash the taunt that my lands are flat lands. Let me, in a word, knock ell out of flat and prove to you that my lands are fat lands first and last.

Wharfe. I hope, Ouse, you are not denying that you are as flat as any flat-iron from the moment I join you above Cawood to the moment you merge into the Humber.

Aire. Nothing could be flatter than those marshes around Airmyn, where I, too, mix my pure waters in that dreadful basin.

Swale. Already at Myton, as I have told, the doom of flatness has fallen over the country-side, and it is there, I suppose, if anywhere, that Ouse assumes control.

Wharfe. Broadly speaking, it would seem as if there is a certain flat foundation for this flat legend.

Aire. Flat in the beginning; in the middle flat; flat to the very end.

Swale. And that's flat.

Ouse. So, too, my little Swale, would you be flat were I to fall on you in a lump; so too would Aire be flat were I to squeeze him in my fat arms; so too would Wharfe be flat were I suddenly to squash him to a pulp. But as it is, I shall do none of these things; nor even seek to crush you all with a fat curse. On the contrary, I will go so far as to

admit that when you come to me pulling long faces one after the other; when you limp and crawl to seek refuge in my arms, a certain momentary flatness comes over me which is not to be disguised. But what of that? Am I to be judged and condemned because a dreadful convulsion does not come across the smooth face of Nature or a range of sky-splitting mountains appear to welcome you all? Is it not rather enormously to my credit that I greet you with the gentle caresses of my green pastures? Calm after storm: rest after turmoil. . . . Is it not enough that my bosom is broad and my arms open to receive? Is it not right that your last little race should be run in the blessed serenity of my meadows?

Wharfe. Certainly, Ouse, there is a certain tranquillity about your lands which soothes me after my turbulent career.

Ouse. But if this is not enough; if you are still sceptical and still mistake ripeness and richness for lumpishness and flatness, why then, let me remind you that I stand not only for those lovely lands about my own banks, but also for the whole of my enormous Riding; for my woods and vales and little rivulets; for the loveliest reaches of my incredible Derwent; for my castles and cliffs, but especially for those incomparable cliffs between Filey Brigg and Flamborough Head, and, above all—for my vasty wolds. . . .

. . . . . .

Swale. Why, then, brag if you must, about your vasty wolds, but do not attempt to filch my darling Derwent from its maternal bed like the envious geographers before you; otherwise I shall compel you all to face about and march the entire breadth of the Shire until we reach the delectable corner of my Riding high up by Lilla Howe, where that babe is cradled. And when you had all adored at that shrine, and followed her through Langdale to Hackness and Forge

Valley; when you had watched her turn her back on the sea like the wilful lass she is, and go meandering through the Marishes to Old Malton and Kirkham Priory and Buttercombe, then I would leave you and her in the hands of Ouse and pray God for a safe-conduct.

Ouse. And forthwith we should step out blithely for my vasty wolds, leaving this trixy Derwent to guard my boundaries, lest Swale should suddenly take it into his head to arrogate yet another huge slab of my lands to himself.

Wharfe. Tell us, Ouse, simply and soberly, where you would have us walk and what you would have us see; for you have yet to prove to us that your lands are as fat as your legs.

Aire. And head——

Ouse. And fist. And this, Aire, I will now do.

Wharfe. Hold!

Ouse. I would have you first of all call in the Cross Keys at Malton and drink a pint of Malton ale. And the better to enjoy it, I would have you follow in the heels of jolly Cryer into the holy crypt itself, and let him draw it straight from the wood; and as you smack your lips over it let him tell you the story. For you must know, all of you, that this inn of mine is the only inn in the known world built on a crypt which is at least eight hundred years old.

Swale. And for eight hundred years has it stood on my side of the river, unless, indeed, all Malton has been suddenly lifted bodily over the boundary.

Ouse. Only the arrogance and imbecility of the Boundary Commissioners bequeathed Malton to you, Swale, for I swear, by all the Canons of the Priory, that Providence created it solely for the benefit of my jolly farmers who strut proudly about its streets.

Wharfe. Then by all the Canons take us away from this no-man's-land, and lead us on to your wolds.

Ouse. I will leap twenty miles over Grimshaw and Wharram-le-Street to be rid of such a curmudgeonly neighbour; and deaf to the plaintive call of Burythorpe and Bugthorpe, and even Fridaythorpe, I will land you slap in Sledmere fields.

Not content with that, I will have you all hurry along to the Black Swan at Wetwang, where the ale and the air are both above suspicion, and a duck pond at either end of the village decoy the benighted Hogs to their doom.

I would have you, then, go over the wolds to Huggate and Warter Priory. And as you go I would have you consider the peculiar fatness and lusciousness of these my lands. For if I mistake not, you will go over this spacious and gracious champaign of an August afternoon, when the sun is burnishing the ripening harvest into a rich and smiling gold. And your amazement will know no bounds. But as you push on and see my proudly swelling wolds spreading their banquet before your wondering eyes; as you see them now dipping down in fold on fold to shield their snug farms, and now reaching up to the sky to toss their golden spoil to the sun, a strange humility will come upon you, and the scales will fall from your green and jealous eyes. For these, you will perceive, are fair lands and fat; these, you will remark, are rolling wolds and rich; and these, you will confess, are green glades and deep; and the roads are the whitest in all the world.

But if you should be so blessed as to breast these wolds of mine again, when the gleaners have done their work and the wains are creaking back to the farms, and the haystacks and wheatstacks and barleystacks and oatstacks are bulging in the yards, not singly, as you would suppose from your own lean and hungry lands, but hobnobbing together in comfortable dozens; if you should see the kail-fields and rape-fields, and watch the fat turnips bursting through the brown stubble; if you might observe my fat stallions champing in

their stalls and my great-bellied kine ruminating philosophically in the fields; and note how every farm is a granary that Egypt might have envied—why, then, I think even you would allow that these are rare lands and rich, and fertile enough to feed the entire Shire should famine seize your fallow fields.

WHARFE. What nonsense is this?

OUSE. But, above all, I would have you observe and carefully take to heart the benignity, the mildness and the expansiveness of these my lands; for after the hurly-burly of your wild fells and scars, after the bleak and barren vistas of your interminable moors and the stark nakedness of your gaunt horizons, they will soothe you like the glancing flames of a fire when you come indoors acold; or like a flagon of wine when you come in athirst; or like the voice of a friend in a strange land. And, indeed, I trust you will hearken to the voices of my lads and lasses as you pass glumly along, for they are all of them warm voices and sweet, and their brown eyes are aflame with laughter and good-fellowship.

SWALE. Am I to listen in silence to such slanders as these, in the very heart of my own dale?

WHARFE. Certainly, Swale, you have cause to complain, and for my part I would warn you, Ouse, to make an end of this before we reach the hamlet of Gunnerside.

OUSE. By'r Lakin, but this is short shrift for my huge lands, and were it not that they are serenely above the need of my poor meed of praise, I should turn my back on the pack of you and get me back to them with all possible speed.

AIRE. Why, then, proceed!

. . . . .

OUSE. Only my charity bids me remain with you to guard you from the perils that lurk abroad. But had I my way, I would have you go with huge strides from Warter (where I left you all dumbfounded and dazed) over Nunburnholme

Wolds and the green track of Kipling-Cote and Moneypot Hill to Etton and Cherry Burton; then on without bite or sup to Bishop Burton itself, which is, I suppose, the whitest and withal the comeliest village in the world—let alone the wolds. And there I would let you all slake your prodigious thirsts and cool your burning heels in the Altisidora Inn——

AIRE. Certainly no Christian inn; no thoroughgoing, thoroughbred jug-and-bottle sort of inn flaunts a name like that!

OUSE. Why, this inn of ours is so Christian that it closes its doors of a Sunday and defies all the Hogs who beat on them and howl for hours on end outside. It is, moreover, so thoroughbred an inn that it owes its very name to an amazing animal of ours that won the great St. Leger one hundred and nine years ago.

WHARFE. Notwithstanding which, I would pass it by, for I have no stomach for inns that bolt their doors of a Sunday, however nobly named; and, indeed, it seems to me that these wolds of yours, with all their signs and wonders, are woefully ill-barrelled.

OUSE. It is good for a man now and again to walk ten honest miles without bite or sup, especially such miles as I have described, for only then can he appreciate the ale that they sell in the jovial inns of Beverley. And it is to Beverley I would lead you from this same sober little village of Bishop Burton; for it is no more than three miles beyond.

. . . . .

AIRE. What? Thirteen thirsty miles without one solitary pint? God forbid that ever I should leave my brimming dale on such a fool's errand!

OUSE. Rest assured, Aire, that I should never lead such a toper to claim Sanctuary at that heavenly dwelling lest St. John should turn in his grave. But haply Wharfe and Swale would walk that road with me and see those lovely twin towers

standing up steadfast and serene above my noble Capital. And seeing them from afar, superbly soaring like the outer pinnacles of Paradise, their hearts would be uplifted too, and all their fatigue would fall from them and even their thirst would be miraculously allayed! Then, walking with a new buoyancy, they would come all of a sudden to that noble North Bar, which guards all the precious fabric of that town.

Aire. And the first pub they approached with bated breath would be guarded by menacing mastiffs and protected by iron chains and double-breasted shutters, and it would be called the Neplusultra as like as not. And, turning their backs on it, they would bite their swollen lips and howl.

Ouse. No such carnal thoughts would trouble their tranquil minds, since they would be instantly translated with a new delight at the sudden surprise view of that white poem in stone which is St. Mary's.

Wharfe. I am bound to confess, Ouse, that mortality would weigh heavily upon me at such a moment, and until I had wet my lips and stuffed my mouth with food, I should pass the marvel by.

Ouse. What? You too? Why then you are no better than Aire; indeed, I rate you rather lower since he at least bolted for home or ever he had passed the gate——But in this you are all alike, you ravenous wolves of the West Riding, all for saving your skins at the expense of your souls.

Wharfe. By all our holy monks and friars, this is vainglory and vilification, if you please! And all the stranger coming from a mouth which was but lately clamouring for ale at any price and be hanged to the beauties of Nature!

Aire. You forget, honest Wharfe, that we had not then, metaphorically speaking, crossed the dotted line that divides the North Riding from the East——

Wharfe. You are right, Aire, and by the same token, when once we have Ouse inside Craven we will make him

toe the line and feed on Beauty, pure and undefiled, morning, noon and night, until he howls for more homely food.

V

Ouse. I am not, I trust, an unreasonable man, and I will allow that I may have expected too much of you on this imaginary march. Even so, it was my intention to lead you all into a fat inn of mine the moment you had been imbued with the austere beauties of that exquisite church.

But even though Wharfe and Aire have abandoned the quest, I like to think that Swale would conquer his carnal appetite while we thoroughly explored not only the jewel of St. Mary's, but also the great Minster itself.

Swale. Fasting and abstinence and the fierce flagellation of the Road are certain short cuts to canonisation, but not, I hope, essential to a proper appreciation of a sermon in stone. In short, I too should better admire these beauties with a full stomach.

Ouse. Gluttons and Hard Drinkers every one of you! Be assured I shall not squander my holy shrines on such fleshpots! Rather will I shove you all straightway into the enormous kitchen of the Beverley Arms and wring thunders of applause from your cackling mouths as you see, smell, and set your teeth into the only kind of Beauty you are capable of grasping. Platesful and tankardsful would I stuff into you until I had drugged you all into a decent frame of mind again. And then, but only then, would I lead you upstairs to dangle my treasures before your astonished eyes at the open window.

. . . . .

Wharfe. But we, for our parts, having satisfied our natural appetites, would sally forth to admire those places at close quarters, and discover a hundred beauties which have eluded you.

Ouse. In that case you would certainly be groping about on all-fours long after nightfall, since there is not a nook nor cranny that I have not explored times out of number. Moreover, I would not let you escape the Road so lightly; for there would still be time to stride out strongly for that famous port of mine that guards our Shire from the barbarians over the seas. And there I would have you stand and watch the commingling waters of our beloved rivers slipping greatly out to sea.

Swale. A sad sight, indeed, that I could not well endure.

Aire. Dreadful dredgers, so I am told, skulk about the shores and haul up bucketsful of sludge to make a passage for my pure waters.

Wharfe. To the pure all things are pure—even the mouth of Ouse and the gob of the Scythian Knight called Humber.

VI

Ouse. Sinking all differences, heedless of all slurs and slander, deaf to all arguments and appeals, I would have you stand there and behold how, having gathered you all in my arms, I lead you safely past the Humber bar. And when you have seen these things, and paid me that homage which is my certain due, I would lead you all to another bar of mine—worthy of such company—where you might drown your dudgeon in great draughts of ale.

Wharfe. No common ale and no ordinary inn would accomplish such a miracle.

Ouse. Make no mistake, Wharfe: this is no common inn. Rather is it, I suppose, the most remarkable inn in the Shire.

Swale. Obviously, then, either the Cat Hole at Keld or else the Cod and Lobster at Staithes—unless, perchance, he has my inn at Tan Hill in mind, for that certainly fulfils all the conditions.

OUSE. Let me set you right, Swale, on that point; for this inn stands in the middle of my royal and ancient city itself, in a passage between Silver Street and Bowlalley Lane, and it is called simply and sufficiently the Olde White Harte; and on second thoughts I suppose it is the most famous inn in England, for it was there that the Civil War really began; and it was there that Charles and his Counsellors met in secret conclave to lay the plot that was to play such ducks and drakes with his kingdom. . . . And Charles, let me warn you, is not the only man who has lost his head in the Olde White Harte, for it is renowned not only for conspiracies and casks, barrels and rump steaks, but also for the beauty of its lasses.

AIRE. I hope, Ouse, you have not lost your head over a barmaid.

OUSE. There are worse wenches, and few bonnier than the maids I have in mind. But they are not for the brades o' you. And in any case you have no head to lose. Anyway, it was there, I tell you, that Charles lost his head and his kingdom.

WHARFE. Then clearly no inn for us, since what Charles lost the Hogs have gained.

OUSE. And what they have gained, we can win back; and it is in that identical Plotting Chamber that I shall gather together my lusty East Riding lads to sweep them back to their Sties.

Meantime, I will sing you for your present delectation a song I conceived when lurking there a short time ago to learn their plans.

SWALE. I hope, Ouse, it is neither a ribald song nor a hoggish song, since we are already within hail of my own unpolluted village of Gunnerside.

OUSE. Rest assured, Swale, it has a flavour all its own: though not half so poisonous an one as the weed that gave it birth; for it is called truly and truculently—"The Song of the Fat Cigar."

WHARFE. I have certainly heard say, Ouse, that the very Hogs in your corner of the Shire are fatter than the normal run of Hogs. Am I to understand that their cigars, too, are fatter and fouler in proportion?

OUSE. You are to shut your mouth and open your nostrils to catch the peculiar aroma of this song, and form your own conclusion.

### THE SONG OF THE FAT CIGAR

(*Bawling*) When Hogs forsake their Steering-Gears
To drown their grief in bitter beers
All on a frosty Morn—
What do they need to calm their fears
And soothe their nerves and dry their tears
And make them glad they're born:
What but the Fat Cigar, Cigar?
The beautiful Fat Cigar!

CHORUS. O I am the Fat Cigar, Cigar,
The fattest, Fat Cigar!
In a golden robe like a Persian Shah,
I come, perfum'd, from Habana,
The noblest leaf in the world, by far—
Most Elegant Fat Cigar!

A hundred thousand ebon slaves
Attend me while the Tamarind waves
And I wax fat and brown!
I have them banged with lusty staves,
The lazy pack of stupid knaves,
When I so much as frown,
For I am the Fat Cigar, Cigar:
The famousest Fat Cigar!

CHORUS. O He is the Fat Cigar, Cigar! etc.

But when I'm rolled up in my sheath,
I love a row of golden teeth
To glitter round my crown!

I love to puff and pout beneath
The Gateway of Lord Rubberheath
And Hogs of High Renown!
There you will find the Fat Cigar,
The goldenest Fat Cigar!

CHORUS. O there you will find the Fat Cigar! etc.

And how I love to take my stand
Between the fat bejewelled hand
Of Hoggish millionaires!
I love the way they flaunt me, and
I love the way they chew my band
When selling stocks and shares:
They too are fat, but fatter far
The whopping Fat Cigar!

CHORUS. O He is the whopping Fat Cigar! etc.

The cigarette is but a gnat,
The pipe's a pauper—foul at that!
On both, alike, I glower.
For I am a Belted Aristocrat,
Refined and O so regally fat!
So very much a power!
For I am the Fat Cigar, Cigar,
The wonderful Fat Cigar!

CHORUS. O He is the Fat Cigar, Cigar,
The wonderful Fat Cigar!
In a golden robe like a Persian Shah,
He comes, perfum'd, from Habana:
The noblest leaf in the world, by far!
The Elegant Hog Cigar!

SWALE. It is fortunate, Ouse, that the odour of that disgusting song has so quickly passed away, for here is the immemorial hamlet of Gunnerside, where the roads divide.

VII

WHARFE. I confess, Swale, I am astonished to see a Literary Institute at this upland hamlet of yours; and I am

glad to see it is so plentifully provided with old bards sitting with their backs to the wall as if fighting a forlorn cause.

SWALE. I am proud to say that my dale is full of such places where our bards foregather and out-thunder one another with fine frenzies.

OUSE. Certainly a better method than that of the Westmorland School.

SWALE. What is that?

OUSE. To go mooning about alone in obscure places, scratching verses on boulders and stones.

AIRE. I hope you are not going to impugn the great Wordsworth who sang so gushingly of our own Riding?

OUSE. Even so it has always been a puzzle to me how so many of those poems of his, which were scratched in those outlandish places, eventually—and sooner rather than later —came to find their way into the Collected Editions of his works. Granted he took great pains to describe the exact spot where the verses were to be found by the curious: nevertheless, I marvel they were not lost for ever. Take, for example, those lines:

*Written with a Pencil upon a Stone in the Wall of a House (an Out-house) on the Island of Grasmere.*

Or those:

*Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb.*

Or those:

*Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone, the largest of a Heap lying near a deserted Quarry, upon one of the Islands at Rydal. . . .*

Is it not, I ask you all, a miracle, that every one of those effusions—but especially the last one—came to be found, and was most carefully printed?

WHARFE. Not at all, Ouse! For there is about all poetry an aura of immortality; and it matters little where it is written; whether chiselled on the craggy ledge of a mountain steep,

or scratched with a diamond on an inn window-pane (which is, undoubtedly, the best place for all drinking-songs), or carefully copied out into a penny exercise-book, or scrawled on a blue sugar-bag; wherever it be, I say, the watchful Muse will guard it jealously against Oblivion and bring it ultimately to the light of day.

SWALE. Even the bad verse?

WHARFE. Even the bad verse, Swale; indeed, most especially the bad verse, because that—like a child with the rickets—is least able to stand on its legs and look after itself.

VIII

AIRE. It seems to me that it is high time we began to look to *ourselves*, for unless I am gravely mistaken, I seem to hear—above the roaring of yonder Bards, above the singing of yonder river, above the knacking and beldering of Wharfe himself—the ominous hooting of an approaching Hog.

WHARFE. Let each man look to himself!

SWALE. Rather, let each man trust to me; for I will promise you a safe-conduct through my own dale.

OUSE. Let us all stand shoulder to shoulder across this noble Bridge of Gunnerside, and brandish our staffs like battle-axes about us! Let us cry out *Par le Splendeur Dex*, and rush upon him together.

AIRE. For my part I will take up a strategical position in the ditch, and bury the dead with full military honours.

SWALE. Let us rather stand up in splendid alignment by this wall, and treat this solitary Hog with the contempt he deserves, for I cannot consent to open hostilities on Easter Morning.

WHARFE. Upon my soul, this Hog is afraid, his terrified engine is stuttering with fright; he has stopped dead.

SWALE. He is perplexed with the cross-roads.

AIRE. He is looking darkly in our direction.

OUSE. He is advancing to the attack.

WHARFE. He is waving his oily handkerchief like a filthy flag as if he desires a parley.

SWALE. I will treat with him.

OUSE. Let me poleaxe him with my ash-plant!

WHARFE. Why, no: he is alone, he is obviously afraid: he is, after all, only a Two-wheeled Hogget, and, therefore, not wholly beyond redemption. Let us hear him out.

OUSE. He is actually dismounting as a token of submission; he is even trying to totter towards us on his two left legs. How he rolls: how he trembles: how oily he is! How grimy and goggled!

SWALE. How mucky: how menseless!

HOG. G'morning! Nice mornin'. Fact is I've run out.

OUSE. Run??

HOG. Can you tell me where I can fill up?

SWALE. Here is the noblest water in all the world.

HOG. Ha ha, can't run on water! Petrol, I mean. . . .

OUSE. Why, so far we have managed comfortably on ale and shoe leather.

HOG. Funny, ain't ye?

OUSE. By the Lord, no! Defend yourself, before I heave you over the bridge.

SWALE. Hold! I cannot have my lovely waters polluted by that. It is too oily by half.

WHARFE. Let us not forget the laws of hospitality and chivalry; for by my staff we are four to one.

AIRE. How I should love to watch his oil wells bubble.

HOG. 'Ere, I say: what's the game, anyhow?

OUSE. War! Little stinking, greasy Hog! War! That is the game!

HOG. Blimey, if they ain't all loopy! I'm off. So long.

OUSE. Hold! We have not done with you yet by a furlong.

HOG. What have I done wrong, anyway?

OUSE. Answer him, Wharfe, while I spike his nasty guns!

WHARFE. Why, no. I cannot consent to that. After all, he is harmless, or at least oil-less, and cannot, for the moment, fire back.

HOG. You mean back-fire, don't you?

WHARFE. I mean Hell-fire.

SWALE. Sh——

WHARFE. I mean you cannot inflict any further casualties on our small remnant of an army. I mean you cannot knock any more gallant Pilgrims down. I mean you cannot go the whole Hog any longer. I mean you cannot ravage and destroy. I mean you cannot harry and pillage. I mean you cannot rip, rive, and run away. I mean you cannot hound any more of us off our Road. I mean you cannot throw out a smoke-screen over our lovely dales. I mean you cannot release any more poisonous gases or oils. I mean you cannot kill, choke, maim or massacre any more honest men. I mean you cannot roar through any more of our peaceful villages and desecrate any more quiet Sunday mornings. I mean you cannot blast your way along with your unspeakable horn. I mean you cannot break any more bones or bylaws. I mean you cannot do any of the infamous things that you delight in doing. I mean you cannot, for the moment, signal to your rabble of an army and set them hotfoot—or hot-engined—in our pursuit. That is what I mean.

AIRE. Let us now confiscate his secret orders, and give him the shortest possible shrift before making an end of him once and for all.

SWALE. On the contrary, let us fasten his hands together and make him totter on before us, as a hostage of war.

OUSE. But let us first of all smash his engine to smithereens.

HOG. 'Ere, 'alf a mo'. I've got a licence, I have.

[*Produces it.*]

WHARFE. Greasy as it is, it is true, he has a licence to kill or whatnot until the next Petty Sessions; though it appears to have been endorsed fifteen times.

OUSE. Then it is high time it was confiscated and his engine blown up sky-high.

WHARFE. Why, no. Had you been alone, Ouse, and had you overpowered this little Hogget single-handed, then you might have had your way. As it is, we are bound by the laws of Chivalry which we swore at our Wapentake to observe —to let him go.

HOG. Thank you, Mister. As for his Nobs there, I'll have the law on him, strike me if I don't.

WHARFE. As to that, we stand or fall together; we walk abreast together, and in the name of Liberty, we let you go.

HOG. How can I go without petrol?

OUSE. By my boots and staff! I will show you how you can go if you do not get out of this. Go on your club-feet; on your knock-knees—but get out of this before we transfix you here and now, and make Hog's pudding of you!

SWALE. Better still, set fire to your diabolical engine; divest yourself of that hideous uniform; seek out an inn where you can cleanse yourself of your grease and grime; and then plunge into my pure river and win back your freedom and manhood.

HOG (*staggering away*). Loopy: that's what they are. . . .

. . . . . .

WHARFE. Depend upon it, Lads, we shall be pursued.

OUSE. Then the sooner the better.

SWALE. Not so, indeed, for we should be decimated before we had seen Kisdon; let us cross my river by the ford at Ivelet, and strike up over Jinglepot Edge where no Hog can hope to follow.

AIRE. I am entirely of your way of thinking, gallant Swale: let us by all means betake ourselves to your terrific hills, and laugh at their fuming legions.

WHARFE. What? Is a single little Hogget to make us run away? Out upon you for a couple of poltroons!

Ouse. I am entirely of your way of thinking, Wharfe.

Swale. I take that as an insult and a challenge, and, for my part, I shall now tramp this noble road backward and forward alone, though all the Hogs in the kingdom rush upon me together. Go, if you will, over the Pass to Appersett or bury yourselves like rabbits in one of my potholes, but do not ask me to go with you.

Aire. Why, there is much to be said for a pothole in such a crisis: it is an excellent compromise.

Wharfe. My brave Bullyrocks all! Is this the moment for brawling? For loggerheads? Let us touch staffs again and swear by the canons of Chivalry to stand or fall together. And let us push on to Muker and the Pass, as we have resolved to do: neither faster nor slower, but exactly as we were doing before that little Hogget bowed to our might.

All. Agreed.

Wharfe. For the moment we are safe, since it is as yet far too soon for the vast majority of the Hogs to be abroad. Remember it is Sunday morning, and for the most part they are still snoring in their beds, or gulping their hogwash, or else grouting amongst the garbage of the Sunday newspapers for nasty gobbets of print.

Swale. Well, then, as we stride along, I will keep my eyes on the danger zones before and behind while you all drink in the ineffable beauty of my hills. I would only ask you to listen now and again to the song of my swirling waters. I would only tell you that so musical is my river hereabouts that up beyond us at Keld, a great Lad of ours—Ned-o'-Dick's himself—built an organ of rare tone entirely out of the harmonious stones he procured from the very bed of the river itself. None the less I do not ask you to go to Keld, even though they would welcome you like kings at the Cat Hole.

Ouse. Why, much as I, for one, should like to go and hear this wonderful instrument, and pay my tribute to such a

fine Lad of ours, I am bound to say I am content to take your word for it, and stick to our line of march.

WHARFE. You say right, Ouse, for if we were to step aside to see a tithe of the Marvels which our every Riding holds, we should be greybeards before we had exhausted any one of them. But it seems to me that your true Walker is not dependent on such things for his pleasure. Give him a fine stretch of Road like this, with nothing whatever to see —and he is satisfied.

SWALE. Why, this is an outrage, indeed!

WHARFE. By the Rood—how tetchy he is!

SWALE. If my ears did not lie, you complained there was nothing whatever to see in these parts.

WHARFE. Be assured, honest Swale, they *do* lie, for I said nothing of the sort.

AIRE. Let me be arbiter and tell off the lies. Two for Wharfe——

WHARFE. As an honest man I protest I speak the truth——

AIRE. Three lies.

WHARFE. I appeal to Ouse as an honest fellow.

AIRE. That is the most thundering lie of all——

OUSE. Why, frankly——

AIRE. I always suspect a man who begins an oily explanation by that word frankly; for it usually implies that he is not in the habit of speaking frankly, has no intention of speaking frankly, and, in short, is busily engaged in concocting some dreadful deceit.

WHARFE. This is Fellowship indeed!

OUSE. This is Brotherhood if you like!

SWALE. This is Modernism gone mad!

WHARFE. Let me explain. What I meant to imply——

AIRE. This gets from bad to worse.

WHARFE. I protest: what I intended to convey was that only a Nincompoop and a Dunderhead would leave such a marvellous stretch of Road as this, to glut himself on some

particular curiosity whether of Nature or of Man. What I hoped to express by my paradoxical aside was that it is only the deaf, the daft and the stone-blind who need such a bait as a Gaping Ghyll, a Fearful Chasm, a Roaring Fall, a Grinning Gap, a Hanging Rock, a Pagan Circle, a Leaning Tower—and, in short, any Marvel whatever—to make them glow. Give me, I say again, a stretch of Road like this with nothing—nothing but the sublimity of Nature itself, nothing but the dancing river and the stupendous hills, nothing but the overwhelming sufficiency of the green uplands and the lonely trees, nothing but that stillness and quietude that bespeak the Immanence of God; and I am aflame.

SWALE. Why, now I understand. Now I see you were paying my dale the highest compliment of all, and I am content. Not that I would have you think we have not a plenitude of awe-inspiring sights to dazzle the jaded eyes of the come-to-day and gone-to-morrow traveller.

IX

AIRE. For myself, I know of no object in Nature more wonderful, more awe-inspiring, more pleasing to the eye, more satisfying to the mind, and more agreeable to the heart of man than a cove. And such a cove I have not yet seen in these regions.

OUSE. Why, away there before us is a jolly little village that is, no doubt, full of coves.

SWALE. I think not——

OUSE. I do not mean the kind of cove Aire means: I mean coves in the sense of Lads.

WHARFE. I hope, Ouse, you do not speak of a Lad in the same breath as a cove, for I cannot imagine two greater opposites.

SWALE. What, then, is a cove?

AIRE. There is only one Cove.

WHARFE. On the contrary, Aire, there are far, far too many coves. There is, we are all ready to admit, one supreme Cove out of which your own irrepressible flood gushes. But there are, in the South country, thousands of little undersized people who have usurped that noble name for their own base selves. These coves—whom Ouse, to his shame, dubbed with the honourable name of Lads—are all that a Lad is not. But let us first of all consider what makes a lad a Lad!

SWALE. Why, a Lad is, I take it, the highest type of manhood. He has all the Cardinal Virtues, and if he has any faults at all, they are the faults of his excessive good nature.

WHARFE. In fine, he is a Boon Good Fellow; he is more often than not of prodigious stature, like Swale and Aire; or else he is as broad in the beam as Ouse, who is, as we all know, a Lad of lads. Yet these are only the physical marks of a Lad. For the rest, he loves laughter and fellowship; his heart sings within him when he falls in with his friends; he is out and about in all weathers; the sun and the snow, the wind and the rain are all one to him; and whether the Road is steep, or straight, or frozen, or full of puddles, he trudges along with equal ardour. He likes the brown earth and the green pastures; he is always climbing terrific hills. The lark and the curlew are his friends, and he is happy for a week if he sees a kestrel. He loves ale and homely foods and roaring fires. He likes to gossip in bar parlours and to sing roaring songs. And withal, he is honest with his fellows.

SWALE. That being the case, what is a cove?

WHARFE. Why, I confess, Swale, I am hard put to it to answer you. Imagine, if you can—and if you cannot, all the better for you—something crawling and furtive and very very small: something with a leer and a lie: something with a choker round its scraggy neck and a check cap pulled right over its squinting eyes: alternatively, something with a top hat, a boiled shirt, a Past and a controlling interest in

the British Press—something that talks through its nose and pads silently along the dark streets. Something that thieves wherever it conveniently can, and something that is never caught. In short, something much more dreadful than anything you have ever conceived; that is a cove.

SWALE. And Ouse dared to call my honest dalesmen coves!

OUSE. Granted it was a sorry jest, though it was only a jest. But while Wharfe has been beguiling you with his nasty character of a true cove, Aire and I have been concocting a jolly Apology in praise of our fine Lads.

AIRE. But all the best verses are mine.

WHARFE. Let us hear this modest song.

. . . . .

SONG IN PRAISE OF LADS

OUSE.

The North-lads they are largely formed
And moulded on a generous plan,
And all their parts are well-informed
With the essential Man.

AIRE.

Their cradle was the craggy moor,
Their bath it was the sea,
The Mountain gods kept sentry o'er
Their boisterous infancy.

OUSE.

The toys that filled their nursery
Were the reindeer and the bear,
The birds they had for company
The whaup and curlew were.

AIRE.

They quickly learned to play the game
That southron coves abhor,
And all the rest they put to shame
At this game of war.

OUSE.

They could not rear a monkey-tree,
But they soon grew a pine,
They had no use for foppery
But they knew how to dine.

AIRE.

Laughter they love and jollity:
Who seeks aright will find
Beneath their taciturnity
A large heart and a kind.

OUSE.

The Lads that live in Yorkshire
Are subtle to be won,
But true as their own oak they stand
And open to their own.

SWALE. It is a touch too pagan for my liking—especially the reference to gods.

WHARFE. Yet, taking it all in all, an honest song; and how much better than the songs that the new generation of Hogs is being taught to sing.

SWALE. Surely the Hogs do not sing songs?

WHARFE. Why, no; they make shift with a kind of drone. And lest any one of you should question the accuracy of this, let me tell you that it was only at great personal risk that I picked it up. But since all is fair in war, I seized an opportunity of listening through the keyhole of a Kindergarten school where a Hog Professor was training the young hoggish idea to scoot. At the moment of my approach he was teaching them a kind of nursery rhyme which went, as far as I remember, like this:

This little Hog went to Market,
This little Hog loved to roam,
This little Hog exceeded the Speed Limit
All the way home.

This little Hog went for a Joy-Ride,
This little Hog killed his Man,
This little Hog got let off with a Caution,
Such was his plan.

This little Hog pulped a Pedestrian,
This little Hog was a Swell,
This little Hog pleaded Not Guilty at the next Assizes,
And he did well.

This little Hog ran amok,
This little Hog toed the Line,
This little Hog squeaked: Long Live the Truly Rural British Constitution,
And paid his fine.

This little Hog broke a Record,
This little Hog knew his job,
This little Hog got a column and a half and his Mug in all the Daily Papers
Like any snob.

This little Hog obeyed the signal,
This little Hog was a Fool,
This little Hog was charged with failing to produce a Licence when called upon to do so,
As is the Rule.

This little Hog pinked a Police-Constable,
This little Hog broke his bail,
This little Hog aroused the wrath of the indignant Magistrate at the City Court next Morning
And went to jail.

At this dread climax a convulsion seized the entire class. Indeed, no sooner was the word jail uttered than all the little Hoggets began to blubber and set up such a howling and a caterwauling as no Christian babes ever so much as imagined.

Whereupon the Hog Professor, to calm them, began a

more cheering little chant, which went like this, and was called "Safety First."

Little Miss Muffett
Stepp'd from her tuffet
Into her little lane:
There came a Hog Rider
"Honk! Honk!" Woe betide her!

. . . .

Miss Muffett was not seen again.

More than that I did not stay to hear, but came away as fast as my legs would carry me, lest I should be impelled to rush upon them and slay them all there and then.

SWALE. Is it not incredible that such things should be?

OUSE. On the contrary, the newspapers are full of such sharp demises; young and old, halt and lame—everyone who dares to stand up on his legs, everyone who is crazy enough, or valiant enough to cross the Road—suffers the same fate. The Casualty Lists grow longer, the remnant of our legions smaller, while the Hogs multiply like locusts in a plague.

AIRE. None the less we remain. We are Four not yet disposed of, and I hope, Ouse, you are not contemplating surrender.

OUSE. By my boots and staff—no; I stand by the Road and I will perish by the Road rather than yield. I do but tell Swale how hard it goes with us in our own Riding. I would but have you know how utterly lost to us your own sad cities are.

AIRE. As for that, let me tell you how I once defied all the Hogs in Boar Lane, and yet live to tell the tale.

. . . . .

SWALE. Tell it, Aire, if you must tell it, inside Nanny Pew'ck's Inn at Muker, for there it is before us. And let us all give thanks that we at least have travelled thus far without loss. But God help us all when we leave my own dale and turn our toes to the south!

For here we stand at the parting of the ways. Here my river fawks like a swallow and all around us her little feeders come tumbling down the fells to swell her flood! From White Beacon Hags, from Lovely Seat, from Great Shunor Fell, from Bleaberry Head, from Red Mea, from Knoutberry Currack, from High Seat, from Coldbergh Edge, from Nine Standards Rigg, from Wham Bottom, from Rogan's Seat they come leaping and bickering—to embrace her. Did you ever see such ghylls and such hills? If only we had time to pursue them all through their little dales! Great and Little Sled dale, Stockdale, East and West Stonesdale—Whitson dale, and half a hundred more. Do you want mountains? I will stagger you with stupendous Steeps that will make you all quake in your shoes! Do you want crazy tracks? I will lead you a dance if you please. Do you want water, such as you have never tasted in all your wasted days?

Aire. For myself, all I want at this moment is a pint of ale; and here, praise be! is a pub.

Ouse. Let us leave Swale to lap up all the water within sight and sound while we quaff tankards about.

Swale. Why, let me first of all introduce you all in a proper manner to our Nanny—one of the great Pew'cks of Swardill—lest she be afear'd of you all.

Wharfe (*singing*).

*Bring us in no capon's flesh, for that is often dear;*
*Nor bring us in no duck's flesh, for they slobber in the mere;*
*But bring us in good ale;*
*For our Blessed Lady's sake, bring us in good ale.*

x

Scribe. I hope, my silent Pater, you have not fallen asleep?

Pater. Alas, no! How can any man fall asleep with a muzzle on his mouth and a roaring and a buzzing of many voices in his ears?

SCRIBE. But such voices!

PATER. And such buzznacking!

SCRIBE. Why, what ails you?

PATER. Ales! You have said it. That is what ails me! There is too much of this stopping for ale, talking of ale, singing of ale, gulping and glorification of ale. Did I not warn you pages ago that I would not tolerate it any longer? And still they go on. To the best of my knowledge they have not yet passed a single tavern.

SCRIBE. I hope you would not have had them pass Nanny Pew'ck's by without a word. On Easter Sunday at that!

PATER. Am I to understand that these brawling Lads of yours cannot pass the time of day without emptying a barrel?

SCRIBE. Not at all, but you must make allowances for the rigour of the Road. Remember they walked in peril of their lives, and that it was only when they gained the sanctuary of the still friendly inns and seated themselves on the frith-stools within that they had a moment's respite.

PATER. I have always understood that the proper place, and, indeed, the only place for a frithstool, was in the holy precincts of a cathedral or a privileged church.

SCRIBE. So, indeed, it was; but you must remember that in the heart of the high dales it is not easy to come across a cathedral unless it be in ruins; so that they had to make shift with the inglenooks.

PATER. Howbeit, it seems to me that there is no excuse for this game of hide-and-seek, for the Hogs are not likely to harry them in these wild parts.

SCRIBE. Such ignorance! Such simple faith! Let me assure you that there is scarcely a road in all the Shire which they do not patrol, petrol and putrefy with their poisonous gases.

PATER. That being so, it behoves these Lads to keep their heads clear and their wits about them. And if they are to be wiped out—which God forbid—let them at least devote the rest of their lives to prayer and repentance and a general

Thanksgiving for the glories of the County. Here you are past the half-way house and have told me next to nothing about it. Let me warn you, therefore, that unless you induce them to forswear swipes altogether, and pay a proper tribute to the Shire, I shall wash my hands of you and them entirely.

SCRIBE. What! You would have them walk on water! And on top of that you would have them cram into their next fifty miles all the unchronicled glories of the Three Ridings! Why, this is a tall order if you please; this is a penance and a satisfaction that makes all the tasks of Hercules and all the fierce austerities of the Saints no more than child's-play. . . . And even were these valiant Lads to undertake it, who am I to set their thundering frenzies down!

PATER. Men have been known to try. . . . Men have been known to write a succinct account of it all in one little volume, unless I am mistaken.

SCRIBE. Imagine the impudence of attempting to tell the whole story of the noblest Shire in one paltry book! Why, the mere thought of it is enough to make a poor Hack like myself fall lame forthwith! For let me tell you it is far, far easier to write the History of the World on the Grand Scale than the History of our Shire in Miniature! Mind, I do not say there is not a certain courage about such an enterprise; and the more deluded scribblers essay it, the better I am pleased. I like to swarm up the library ladders and survey the noble ranks of failures. I like to see the Historians line up with the Antiquarians. I like to see the Philologists stand shoulder to shoulder with the Geologists. I like to see the heavy ordnance of the Geographers lumber up into position behind them. I like to see the Bards and Balladists, the Heralds and Fabulists, the Parochialists and Entomologists, the Muscologists and Conchologists blow their trumpets, wave their banners, flaunt their pedigrees, and blink through their spectacles as they tell their tale. Nevertheless, I cannot take up my stand with them.

PATER. And why not, pray?

SCRIBE. Because I have no stomach for lost causes, and because I have sworn fealty to these Four Lads, whose battle-shout is Victory. In short, you must take them as I found them—and that is my solitary claim to Fame—and at this moment they are stepping out from Nanny Pew'ck's little inn, where Aire has been covering himself with glory (I'm sorry to say you have missed his great speech): at this moment, I say, they are walking erect and sure towards the Pass. And with your blessing upon them, I hope—for the great climb.

PATER. At least they are out of the inn; and that is well worth a *Pax vobiscum!*

XI

OUSE. I can forgive you much, Swale, for such ale as that. I can even forgive Aire his foolish swagger. I could almost find it in my heart to forgive Wharfe his line of march: I can think charitably of an Antiquarian——

WHARFE. None the less, it is a mistake to take ale before breasting a windy hill like this one looming before us. It will make you sweat——

OUSE. I cannot countenance such a heresy. In decadent days like this, when ale is so difficult to get at all, it is never a mistake to drink it. And the only effect it has on me is to make me ooze charity and friendship towards all men. In moments such as this, I remember their virtues at the expense of their failings. It was, I am certain, in such moods that all great poems were composed and all the more splendid litanies. In such moods I am aglow with fellowship and brotherhood——

AIRE. He is obviously drunk.

OUSE. By my malt and barley—that is a lie, and I will make you smart for it.

SWALE. Such is his fellowship——

OUSE. I tell you all, that far from being drunk, I am superbly sober. I see the world in a clean and kindly light. I recognise that, in the past, I may have been a little harsh towards my fellows. I reflect, with a new reverence, on all the fine Lads and Lasses who have added a lustre to our Shire. I am even minded to tell them all of one after the other like a joyous litany.

AIRE. You will need all the breath you have to spare to surmount this prodigious Pass.

SWALE. And all your wits to take in my superb scenery.

WHARFE. And all the charity you are beginning to ooze to forgive my strong strides.

OUSE. Howsoever, I would sing the praises of all those who have in any way contributed to the glory of our Shire, especially of those whom the world has already forgotten. And to show the largeness of my charity I will praise first of all:

All those zealous Antiquarians who have so pertinaciously dug up the soil of the Shire with their picks and spades.

All those benevolent Historians who have described the famous Battles and measured the famous Battlefields of the Shire.

All those painstaking Geologists who have examined the strata of the Shire.

All those Conscientious Compilers of Guide-books who have dealt so diligently with the inexhaustible wonders of the Shire.

All those agèd Centenarians who by their length of days have added to the dignity of the Shire.

SWALE.

Especially Henry Jenkins of Ellerton-upon-Swale, who lived to the incredible age of 169 and was certainly the very oldest man in the world since the Patriarchs and Prophets.

OUSE. I am sorry, Swale, that you should deem it necessary to dig up any one corpse when, as we all know, we have scores and scores.

WHARFE. As for instance:

Simeon Ellerton of Craike in Easingwold who died at the comparatively early age of 104, but who walked all over the country in all weathers and thought nothing of carrying building-stones on his head for fifty miles at a stretch.

AIRE.

And Jonathan Hartop of Aldborough who lived to be 138 and left seven children, twenty-six grandchildren, seventy-four great-grandchildren and one hundred and forty great-great-grandchildren. And he was a rare Walker too.

WHARFE. And I hope you will not forget

Blind Jack Metcalfe of Knaresborough—one of the great Metcalfes—who knew every inn in the County, and who not only paced and beat the gentry when they rode to the North, but also swam in our dangerous Nidd, raced, hunted, diced, fiddled, fuddled, eloped with a spirited wench, built great roads and bridges, descended precipices, explored valleys, surveyed lands, and fought in the 'forty-five, blind as a bat though he was. And he was the best Walker of them all!

AIRE.

With the possible exception of our famous Foster Powell himself, who could have paced a Hog and beaten him, so I am told.

WHARFE.

But let us not forget Sarah Miller, also of that dale, who lived to be 103 and was famous throughout the land for her walking and goose-pies.

SWALE.

And Thomas Newman of Bridlington who lived to be 153——

AIRE.

And Robert Ogilby, my notorious tinker, who lived to be 114 and walked thousands upon thousands of miles.

WHARFE.

And John Philips of Thorne whose teeth were good and who walked to the end of his 117 years.

AIRE.

And Levi Whitehead of Bramham who won the Buck's head time and again for his fleetness of foot; not to speak of the Queen Anne guineas.

WHARFE. And he, too, was a Walker to the last of his one hundred years.

OUSE. Hold! Am I to have no say in this? Did I not myself begin this noble pæan, and am I to be rudely pushed on one side?

AIRE. Certainly, if you persist in waddling.

OUSE. Stride-whallops!

WHARFE. By your enormous charity, honest Ouse, put a curb on your tongue—and proceed.

OUSE. Why, then, let us have an end of this musty roll-call of centenarians. Are not our graveyards, I repeat, full of such famous frames? Does not the thunder of their marching still echo over our agèd roads? Are not their names blazoned on many a lichened tomb?——

SWALE.

Blush not, Marble,
To rescue from Oblivion
The Memory of
Henry Jenkins. . . .

OUSE. Pest on you, Swale! how can a man keep the thread of his argument if you are for ever barging in with your particular Patriarch? Let me say again, it is not these deservedly famous Lads I would remember, for all the thinking world knows about them already. Books have been filled with nothing else but such long livers and great Walkers of ours, and, therefore, I would pass them by and rather single out for praise those modest obscurantists whom Fame has not yet rendered immortal.

WHARFE. Such as:

OUSE.

All those Indefatigable Entomologists who have devoted their nights and days to the discovery of our Missing Link or our Missing Link but One.

All those Well-meaning Genealogists who have perspired over our prodigious Pedigree.

All those Jolly Geographers and Cartographers who have fearlessly penetrated the wildest, savagest and more inaccessible fastnesses of our Shire with their calipers and compasses.

WHARFE.

All those roaming Surveyors who are for ever giving our clever cart-tracks a Roman name.

AIRE.

All those Wallowers and Shovellers who have discovered a Pig of Lead, or a Barrowful of Old Bones.

SWALE.

All those orthodox Ornithologists who have contracted rheumatism while watching our cuckoos playing ducks and drakes.

OUSE.

All those Superlative Naturalists who have exhausted the Latin tongue to find natural names for our wild flowers.

WHARFE.

All those Forgotten Drywallers and Ditchers who covered our Shire with such stupendous monuments of stone.

OUSE. I was coming to them shortly, but let me first honour:

All those Hedgers and Dikers and Thackers who have wielded their billhooks in the heat of the sun to the delight and delectation of all who walk through my vasty lands.

AIRE.

All those Innkeepers and Innbuilders who have so plenteously barrelled, mugged, tapped and ingle-nooked my own green dale.

SWALE.

All those rare Dalesmen who have tented their flocks in the

lonely places and helped to breed my incomparable sheep and stallions.

WHARFE.

All that Noble Company of Poets and Balladists who have sung the praise of our County in deathless song.

OUSE. Why, that is but a scurvy way of honouring them! Let us particularise every man Jack of them; else they will not be known below the Trent for another hundred years. For the Critics and Anthologists who live in glass-houses in the South have never yet heard of any poets above Sussex, and cannot endure a North wind down their spines.

WHARFE. To do that would take a month of Sundays, let alone one short afternoon; for we should have to begin with Cædmon, who sang the Beginning of Things, and so through the whole gamut to those present-day Lads of ours who are so fond of singing the End of Things.

SWALE. But those are the very Lads who need our praises most.

AIRE. Certainly we must give my Swans of Aire and Calder a niche all to themselves. Let us, therefore, begin with

John Nicholson, who twanged the Lyre of Ebor.

SWALE.

And end with that sweet Lass of mine who sang of the Singing Rivers. . . .

WHARFE. But in a special sense, I would have you praise:

That adopted Lad of mine who sang the Songs of the Ridings.

OUSE. But it was my own Marvell who so aptly described the Hog:

> Dear Hog! Thou King of Meat!
> So near thy lord—mankind!

SWALE.

And I would have you remember and revere my immortal Richard Blakeborough, who had all the legends, nominies and

ballads of my Riding on the tip of his tongue, and who knew more about our witches than any man alive.

AIRE.

And let us not forget Bill o' th' Hoylus End, not to mention Cockle Sarah and Old Salt Jim.

WHARFE. And Besom Jamie of Thresfield, and the lost cobblers of Thorpe.

Last and not least, old Joseph Hey of Beamsley: the grandest wheelwright in the world, for his wagons will be rumbling round the Shire long after we are dead and dust.

SWALE.

And all those Axe-Champions of ours who have so astonished the world at large.

OUSE. Finally, let us not forget:

All those Hogs——

AIRE. What? This is straining my charity on the rack: this is thumbscrews and gyves indeed!

SWALE. And yet we must love our enemies——

OUSE.

I say: All those Hogs who have already, or shall shortly, set fire to their diabolical engines and make a Pilgrimage to the Holy Places——

WHARFE. But for myself I will remember with especial pride:

That Lad of lads who swam the neck of the Strid and came out alive and laughing.

OUSE. And in a very particular way:

All those buxom Lasses who have made my butter and cheese famous throughout the land.

WHARFE. Nor must we forget:

All those deft Lasses of ours who have made our Apple-Pies, our Fat Rascals, our Dumplings and—above all—our Yorkshire Pudding celebrated, honoured, cherished, and (but how basely!) imitated all over the known world.

What an influence for good is theirs! What blessed Ambassadors of Peace and Good Will are they! What Quellers of Distrust! What Promoters of Brotherhood!

OUSE. You are right, Wharfe: they are worthy of praise! Sometimes, it seems to me that they are worthy of canonisation; for there is something essentially virtuous about those dishes. The pity is that the names of their discoverers, or rather creators (like those of all the truly great), are lost in obscurity; otherwise—depend upon it—the odour of sanctity would be about their lives.

. . . . .

SWALE. Rest assured, Ouse, all those holy foods come out of Nunneries or Abbeys. Indeed, there is a legend in our dale——

OUSE. I hope you are not going to stretch my charity too far?

SWALE. No farther than to Mount Grace Priory, where—

OUSE. It is too far by forty furlongs. For though there is a time and place for all things——

SWALE. Why, that is exactly the point of my legend.

. . . . .

OUSE. There is, as I was about to say, a time and a place for legends; but it is not now. There is nothing legendary about a Yorkshire Pudding. Of all the masterpieces of the oven, it is essentially a matter of fact. Eggs and milk, flour and water; these are all tangible things; there is no mystery about them. You might call them the four home-truths. To whip them up into a batter with a thorble and add a dash of salt is no occult science. It is done every day in the week by hundreds of our honest lasses in white aprons, with their sleeves rolled right up to the elbows. Everything is square and above the baking-board. The luscious batter is flicked into a

square tin aswim with hissing fat. A mighty convulsion ensues: a banging and a crackling disturbs the serenity of the oven as it receives this tumultuous guest. And here, I will grant you, is a touch of the miraculous; though far, far from being a legend—it is one of the few absolute Truths known to man. You all know what I mean. There is some subtle chord, link or harmony between the batter and the oven: something which tells the batter that it has been deposited in an honest Yorkshire oven: something which satisfies the oven that it has received its own. The effect is instantaneous. The tumult and the shouting dies. The great transformation takes place. And at the appointed time—known only to that buxom lass who stands on guard with arms akimbo—that golden glory, that embrowned wonder, that aureoled splendour—that Yorkshire Pudding emerges to gratify the sight and soothe the craving of hungry man.

WHARFE. But if, on the contrary, sharp practice has been employed: if that oven by any wicked fraud is not a Yorkshire oven: if that egg-milk-flour-and-water batter is not a Yorkshire batter, how frightful is the sight that meets the inquiring eye! And if this unspotted Anchorite, instead of being served up in his own little cell of a dish, is dumped between the grosser vegetables and the fleshly meats, scorched to a cinder or flabby as dough, as is done daily in that southern Sink of Iniquity already mentioned: how horrid is the shock that shoots through the deluded teeth! . . . But how short (and rightly so) is the shrift it receives.

OUSE. Yet Swale has the hardihood to talk of legends!

SWALE. Rest assured, Ouse, I shall not divulge my legend while you are in this frothy condition.

WHARFE. I am bound to say I, too, have never heard tell of this legend in my own Riding and take it, therefore, with a good pinch of salt.

AIRE. Everyone knows that Yorkshire Pudding is one of the secrets of Craven, and that all other kinds are the

crafty concoctions of the pastrycooks. In my old farms we cook it under the spit. . . . And a fig for your ovens!

OUSE. By my flour and eggs! By my milk and water! By my golden batter! This is impudence if you please.

WHARFE. Call it rather patriotism, honest Ouse.

OUSE. Parochialism would be nearer the mark.

WHARFE. There are, alas, not many things about which we can wholeheartedly agree, for let Ouse talk never so eloquently, and Swale never so naïvely, and Aire never so knowingly——

AIRE. And Wharfe never so long-windedly——

WHARFE. Each one is convinced in his secret heart that the chiefest glories of our Shire belong exclusively to his own Riding. I hope you are all agreed on that?

SWALE. } Upon my soul I am.
AIRE. } It sounds too honest to be true.
OUSE. } There is a catch in it somewhere.

WHARFE. But on this question of Yorkshire Pudding I must make a stand. Fratch, if you must fratch, on your rival ales and dales, but on this one thing, which I look upon as the touchstone of the Shire, I insist on unity.

OUSE. I hope you are not referring to my Pudding as a touchstone, for that is exactly what it is not.

SWALE. And let me inform you that my Pudding has none of the qualities of a stone; rather has it the lightness of crumpets, the crispness of cracknels, the softness of syrup and the savour of unimaginable pabulum.

WHARFE. In short, it is precisely like the Pudding that is made in every nook and corner of the Shire, always excepting the Great Pudding that we make at Burley-in-Wharfedale, which is like no other Pudding in the known world. But that apart: here we have something common or unique to the whole County, something that has worked more miracles than chestfuls of medicines; something, indeed, that has worked a very present miracle without fuss or fury.

SWALE. I am sorry to have missed that, for there are few things in the world I care more about than miracles, though so far they have eluded me.

WHARFE. Look about, and you will see it at your feet; for by simply talking about this potent Pudding we have climbed the better part of this prodigious Pass without a protest from anyone!

SWALE. You call that a miracle!

WHARFE. No reasonable men could expect more.

OUSE. Why, then, let us agree to swallow our miraculous Puddings with what grace we may and fratch no more.

AIRE. I am all for peace and quiet and good will among men.

SWALE. Then rest here a moment and take a last glance at my dale!

XII

WHARFE. How good it is to see the County spread out at one's feet!

OUSE. You say right, Wharfe, for there is no finer experience vouchsafed to man.

WHARFE. This is to be, in very truth, heirs and coheirs of this great land, and to realise, with renewed intensity, that we hold the keys, title-deeds and the freehold of this our Shire. Here on the crest of the hill, how we can laugh at those myopic Hogs who stake out their thirty thousand acres and think to keep them all to themselves! Here, with the wind and the curlews around us, how small the hugest Landlord seems: how like a cage, his palisaded hall.

SWALE. And how vast our demesnes! How unfettered our freedom!

OUSE. Free as our rivers and as our fathers free!

WHARFE.

We have lived for an hour on the heights:
On the valleys look'd with disdain:
We have gazed on the splendid sights
That only the god-like gain!

OUSE. We have drunk of the gallant wine
Which is brewed on the lofty hills,
And we shall not easily pine
Whom the mountain manna fills!

. . . . .

AIRE. But how willingly would I bequeath to you all my share of this immediate estate, might I have one glance at my own lands!

SWALE. What! still unsatisfied; still grumbling; still harping on that cracked string when you are surrounded by all that is best and fairest in the land? Let me tell off the cohorts of the peaks around us, to convince you once and for all——

AIRE. Hold! we have heard them already and I strain my eyes in vain for the only peaks I desire; for the Craven Hills, whose bold tops I hope presently to descry. Meantime, I am determined to speak up in their praise. Too long have I been gagged and muzzled. Too long have I played second fiddle to your bassoons.

WHARFE. After all, it is still a mort of miles to Hawes, and I for one will hear you in peace.

OUSE. Great rhythms beat through my brain and songs take form; and while he is vapouring I will hunt for rhymes.

AIRE. And I will paralyse your little Muse with inspiration. I will lead her to that Massif; that incredible Marvel of Creation which the Geologists, who are corrupted, speak of as the Craven Fault, meaning, I suppose, the Craven Splendour. Overwhelming as it is at all times, I think I would have her go there of an October evening when my river is in spate and all the ghylls are spilling down the fellsides like frothy milk from the pails. I would have her

observe the burnished clumps of trees; the russets, the orange, the crimson, the gold. I would have her brush the lichened walls as she passes along the lanes from Airton by Kirkby Malham to "Mawm" itself, which the ignorant pronounce Mal–ham. And I would time her arrival for sunset, when the west was aflame. Very cunningly would I spirit her over my brawling waters, and so up the hill . . . past the old witch of Janet's Cave, to the farm that guards the Scar. Dusk would veil the menace of the hills as she stepped over the spongy fields by the side of the foaming beck; and before her she would dimly discern the shaggy outline of a *Lion Couchant* and a *Lioncel Regardant*, and I trust she would not be dismayed. For I would have her push boldly forward, up to the ankles in honest muck and mire, and momentarily in danger of death from heart-failure as she rounded the bend. But if she were the mettlesome Muse I take her to be, she would step forward to the very foot of the Fall, and there catch her breath in amaze.

Swale. Why, what cataclysm or cataclasm would so appal her?

Aire. It is as if two giants have contended for possession of this terrific bluff which we call Gordale Scar: it is as if they have encircled it with their mighty arms and wrenched it asunder as a lad tears an apple. The result is one of the Eight Wonders of the World. And let me tell you, Swale, that to stand alone in that cirque profound when darkness falls; to hear the banging and the booming, the roaring and the bellowing of the agonised cataract as it is hurled over the crags; to walk beneath the bulging shoulders of those cleft cliffs and be struck on the face with the flail of the rebounding hail; to scramble over the stones nearer and nearer to the brink of the boiling waters; to see them come hissing through the strangulating claws of the topmost rock, take a sinister twist, writhe in convulsion and then hurl themselves in a great torrent over the last ledge: this,

I say, is no bad test for a lad of spirit, and it would certainly strike a cold terror into the heart of a poltroon. It is a place for owlets, kelpies and kestrels. As for Ouse's little Muse, why, I gravely fear for her life in such a trial. . . .

Ouse. What's that? What's that? I was groping for a theme—but I thought I heard my name.

Aire. You would be far better employed in listening to my panegyric of Gordale Scar, for then your Muse would not want subject to invent. I was saying, Ouse, that not Niagara could roar louder than that thundering beck boiling over into its cauldron.

Swale. I think, Aire, you cannot have seen Caldron Snout, Hawdrow, Currack, Catrake nor Kisdon Force.

Aire. But I have seen Gordale Beck, and I would have you all see it at such an hour as I have named, and then wipe out the memories of every other paltry fall in Nature, and, indeed, when once you have seen this and heard the thunderous parle of my waters, you will agree.

Then, with your head full of this horrific noise, you will at last tear yourselves away from that Valhalla and scramble back as best you may to the inn for refreshments, and then—if the moon be up—step out again on to the Road.

Ouse. What? You would have us go barking our shins again to get yet another glimpse of your tedious Scar?

Aire. Indeed, no! I would not have the terror of that place quite paralyse your little soul; rather will I have you follow the westerly road until of a sudden your eyes are dazzled by a phosphorescent splendour shining out of the womb of the dark hills, and you are struck, dumb and motionless, by surprise. Whereupon, a great fear will come over you and you will begin to repent violently and passionately of your evil days. And as you stand there spellbound and impotent, a music like the murmur of ten thousand angelic lyres will play about your ears, but you will not need any seer to interpret those silver harmonies since inerrable

instinct will tell you that a mighty river is being born and that its name is Aire. And the moon will suddenly swing from her reef of clouds like a censer, flooding the gorge with lambent beams, and the white glory which is Malham Cove will stand revealed against the dark spurs in all its matchless beauty. . . .

Ouse. And then, I take it, we would put our best foot forward and speed over the hills?

Aire. No doubt, Ouse, you would, provided you were not blinded by the revelation. But if you were a true poet and a courageous, you would begin writing that sonnet which has so long eluded you, and so join the immortals. The better to do so, you would get back to Malham or Kirkby Malham and stay the night, if only that you might see this blinding cliff next morning flecked with the full radiance of the sun: a sight, I would warn you, that only the pure in heart can look upon without blenching. And O! the beauty and the wonder of my stripling river gushing from beneath that mighty canopy! I tell you there is nothing in all Nature to compare with it. Stand beneath the white bastion, look upward, and you see a cascade of diamonds falling. . . . And rainbows everywhere. Stand on the crest of the cliff and you will see all Craven spread beneath your feet, and my silver river threading its way through the dale beyond. A river which not rocks nor stones nor cliffs nor impenetrable dungeons can keep back!

XIII

Wharfe. I have always understood, Aire, that there was a considerable doubt as to where your river actually did begin. I have heard say that this puny freshet, that gurgles rather feebly from the foot of the Cove, is only a small tributary stream; and that your river really rises a couple of miles away, and then sinks miserably in the ground,

issuing forth in at least three places—always provided that it does issue forth at all!

AIRE. What heresy is this! And by what base minds are such legends fabricated?

WHARFE. Many praiseworthy geologists have investigated your origins and I cannot believe they would all wilfully mislead us. Have they not been at pains to pollute your once-pure waters by pouring all manner of coloured chemicals into your vitals in order to discover which of these numerous springs is really Aire? And I am sorry to say you came out of the ordeal a polyglot. But in this the geologists are only the precursors of those other industrious fellows who have poured still fouler chemicals into your lower reaches to prove that the End justifies the Beginnings.

SWALE. I should hate to be so bemauled.

OUSE. Am I then to understand that, in spite of all Aire's brag and all his quotations from the poets, he does not rise at Malham Cove at all?

AIRE. Let me wipe these ugly stains from my scutcheon and put this matter right once and for all.

OUSE. It is certainly time.

AIRE. And who better able to clear up the muddle than I? Know, then, that when God unleashed the great rivers of the world He decreed that one of them at least should be a perennial source of wonder to men, and especially to those geologists whom He foresaw in the dim future groping about with their calipers and chemicals, trying to track everything down. To this end He caused to be scooped out in the highlands of Craven a mighty cavity which He watered with secret geysers and flooded with a volume of the most limpid water in the world. And this our forefathers called (quite rightly) Malham Tarn, since it lies two miles north of Malham Cove itself. Now the Cove, you must know, is the most mirific and marvellous Cove in Christendom.

OUSE. I begin to hate this Cove; and very shortly I shall

begin to curse this Cove violently and certainly not covertly.

AIRE (*out of hand*). Out of the Tarn, as Wharfe observed, flows a stream of pellucid water in the direction of the Cove. The great Ruskin himself once dammed the overflow from Malham Tarn in the hope of settling the mystery; but still my river came gushing from the Cove serene and unperturbed—and will come, though all the great men in the world attempt to maul or meddle with it. The great Kingsley, again, had no sooner clapped eyes on my Cove than he off and wrote a Masterpiece called *Water Babies*. In short, there is scarcely a great man in English Letters who has not dipped his pen in this pure font as a prelude to winning immortal glory. I hope, one day, you, too, will be privileged to see this lovely Tarn and this impish stream rushing merrily over the fields, until it—quite suddenly—disappears into the womb of the green hills at the place called Water Sinks! Whereupon, you will stand for a moment dumbfounded, and then rush off with extreme dispatch, lest you, too, should sink suddenly and everlastingly into an untimely tomb. However, once you are safely at the foot of the Cove, you will give a great shout of joy to see an irresistible force of water come foaming from the foot of it through an aperture no wider than a keyhole.

OUSE. So this is the key to the mystery! He rises, self-confessed, in a keyhole!

AIRE. But if you say that this is the self-same water that flowed from the Tarn, you will be on even less secure ground. For, as Wharfe implied, divers other springs and streams contend for the glory of being the true begetter of my river. Indeed, the whole of that green corner of Craven is honeycombed with unfathomable potholes (each guarded by its own hobman) and watered by innumerable springs; while the earth is murmurous with subterranean streams. There is one stream that rises by Capon Hall,

and then mysteriously disappears into the bosom of the earth. And this it is which, according to one School of Thought.——

WHARFE. The Chemical School?

AIRE. . . . Emerges at the Cove and is the only source of my river. There is Gordale Beck itself rising by High Mark, and hurling itself over the Scar to join forces with the rest. And this, according to a second School of Thought, is, likewise, the one true source of my river. There is—or rather are—moreover, two further springs, dignified by the name of Aire Head, that gurgle out of a green hill away beyond Malham itself. And these, according to a third School of Thought—and I have seen aged dalesmen froth at the mouth in the Lister's Arms and in the Buck too in defence of them—are jointly the veritable source (or sources) of my river. Lastly——

SWALE. Thank God for that word!

AIRE. . . . There is the spout or well-spring bursting from the foot of the Cove itself, which may be almost any one or two or none of these; but which is, according to my School of Thought, the true and original source of my river. Certainly, it is the most wonderful of all, and only a stream destined to bear an imperishable name could so hack and gouge its way through the hills; squeeze underneath that awful cliff, and finally draw all the other rival rills to its arms. And having gone so far and seen so many wonders, I hope you will follow it a little farther and be still more enthralled. I hope you will strike up into the dark fells beyond. I hope you will explore the hidden dry valley of Trougate under Comb Scar, and so up to my great farms: Low Trenhouse, Higher Trenhouse, Tennant Gill, High Mark, Rainscar and Penyghent; not to speak of the secret delights of Darnbrook. I hope, too, you will go over Peter Castle and Parson's Pulpit and Fountains, and so over into Littondale with a sharp regret.

Wharfe. And my boot at your behind. . . . And a fig for your waste lands!

Ouse. For myself, I should step out and hie me away from such a hole-and-corner sort of stream; for it is not becoming in a river to affect the manners of a mowdywarp.

Aire. Such conduct would certainly be consistent with the usual manners of a fool. But let me tell you that all these meanderings and vagaries are but a cloak for the cleverest game of hide-and-seek played between God and man. And once the game is over, my stripling river is off and away through Malham like a hound off the leash, taking fields, walls and fences in its eager stride, as who should say: Catch me if you can. I do not bury myself in awesome ravines, I am not to be pent in by crazy hills. I canter away over my open pastures like a jolly Craven squire on his cob. By Bellbusk and Gargrave; by Skipton and Kildwick, and a hundred other lovely places to the sea!

XIV

Ouse. The astonishing thing to me, Aire, is that a river with your talent for disappearing did not run to earth again a little to the west of Leeds, and remain underground at least until you were out of the Halloo of the Hogs and hounds who there sully your waters with their oily paws.

Swale. A nasty thought!

Aire. From a nasty mind.

Wharfe. Hold! If the sources of Aire are veiled in mystery, and his middle shrouded in a smoke-screen, he is hardly to blame for that. There are black spots on the sun, and even Ouse is not entirely undefiled. In one sense, surely, it is a compliment to Aire that men have so crowded his banks and that great cities jostle for his possession. If there are now no Abbots and no fat Monks in his dale, at least there are some fat Aldermen and Councillors; if no flocks of sheep in his cities, at least there are droves of hogs.—And

if Kirkstall is now a soot-scarred skeleton, at least there is the Post Office, Boar Lane, Swinegate, the Town Hall and the Sewage Works. Progress, we are assured, is making great strides; and certainly many of the mill chimneys that cast their canopy over the West Riding are taller than Kirkstall's towers. If Aire has lost his cows and his pigs, certainly he has any number of barges, brimful of coal and pig iron. Moreover——

SWALE. But these are dreadful thoughts in such clean air as this! And it is not the least of the sins of Aire that by talking so interminably we have passed the most famous Buttertubs in the world without so much as a word, and are now within a stone's-throw of Hawes.

WHARFE. Why, Hawes is still at least two miles farther than ever you will throw a stone, Swale!

OUSE. The wish, you might say, is father to the thought.

AIRE. I have always noticed that when men are suffering from fatigue they take refuge in feeble puns to conceal their weariness.

OUSE. Speak for yourself!

XV

WHARFE. Talking of stone-throwing, I cannot help regretting that our ancient and honourable game of Duck-stone has gone out of fashion, for it has always seemed to me to be at once the simplest and yet the most exciting game in the world.

OUSE. The reason is not far to seek. The stone is the oldest kind of weapon known to man; to sling stones was one of his first instincts. It is not surprising, therefore, that our forelders were, according to the ancient chroniclers, the most redoubtable stone-slingers in the early world, as the barbarous hordes who crawled into their domains knew to their cost. To hack stones was to them a labour of love: to hurl stones their delight. And remember, that as an expression of

hostility, it never fails to make its mark. A bullet, by comparison, is the weapon of a poltroon; it comes on a man with the stealth and swiftness of a Hog, and as cunningly kills, whereas a stone not only gives due notice of approach, but usually strikes its object flat between the eyes before knocking him down. Such were the stones with which David felled Goliath, and though I will not go so far as to dogmatise that David was a Yorkshireman, at least we can claim that all Yorkshiremen are descended from David in virtue of their peculiar stone-throwing propensities alone. Goliath, on the other hand, was certainly a Hog.

AIRE. By Gogmagog! what has this skull-cracking got to do with the glorious game of Duckstone?

OUSE. I was coming to that. For you should know, Aire, that when our master stone-throwers had bashed the ducks off all the invading hordes—especially of the Numskulls who came over from the Low Countries—they were left with a great pile of stones on their hands and no more pates to crack. The more saintly of them set to work forthwith to build those Abbeys and Cathedrals of ours which even to-day make the Hogs quake in their shoes. For the rest, they beguiled the time by heaving prodigious stones at one another's ducks or decoy-stones like the Lads they were.

WHARFE. I have always understood this game of Duckstone to be a game peculiar to my own lusty Riding.

AIRE. And with reason. Go into any back-alley in one of my great cities and you will still see a colourable imitation of this game any day in the week, I warrant you.

SWALE (*simply*). My great-great-grandfather was the Duckstone Champion of the North.

OUSE. By my kevels and pestles, indeed! I have half a mind to pulverise you all with stones to prove my skill. For let me tell you that far from being confined to your backyards, graveyards, courtyards, taw-rings and skittle-alleys, this noble game was practised all over the Shire; so that

there were great inter-Riding Duckstone contests held at York long before the Scorton Arrow was thought of. Why, even to this day you may see the effigies of three such Lads standing menacingly on the turrets of Monk Bar in York with a great stone in their hands—they were, perhaps, the last of those champion stone-slingers of ours who wandered about the land in great droves challenging foreigners to a contest. Even to-day, I say, you will find remains of these Duckstone contests dotted about the waste-lands of the South. There is one at Stonehenge, for example, which is an excellent specimen of a Duckstone Court as it was then laid out; and up and down the country there are others; while at Carnac over the seas (as I am told) stands the ruins of an International Duckstone Tourney, at which our fellows challenged, beat, and most miserably disgraced all-comers from foreign lands. Some, I know, will have it that these foreign fellows were called Druids, and that they did not so much throw stones as worship stones. But you can take it from me that the moment our champions clattered into their circles to preach them a new sort of sermon in stone, they realised their idolatrous mistake and took their drubbing like the good Druids they were.

WHARFE. That being so, Ouse, who knows but that our terrific hanging rocks at Brimham were not placed there by these self-same prodigious progenitors of ours for practising purposes?

If only we were strong enough and numerous enough! If only we had those rampaging Champions at our sides! If only we could fall on the Hogs to the same purpose! Can you not imagine a rising of all the Walkers and Duckstone-Throwers of the Kingdom: can you not picture them taking their stand on the Open Road lined up in Battalia and challenging the Hogs to mortal combat—Death by the Stone or Death by the Wheel: a coping-stone for a carburettor: a brick for a bonnet: a hod for a Hog? Can

you not see a legion of Walkers lined up in the ditches provided for them and chucking colossal pieces of wall at every Hog that came within aim?

SWALE. Why, that would be murder pure and simple!

WHARFE. True! Pure and holy Swale! That *would* be murder pure and simple, and I am inclined to agree with you that it would be far too pure a death for any Hog. For what have our stones done to deserve such contamination?

SWALE. Why, that was not my intention at all!

WHARFE. Of course not, gentle Swale; you, no doubt, would be all for heaving bricks baked in an oven at them, rather than our own pure stones; but alas, both are out of the question since we are at the moment so small a band.

XVI

AIRE. I have sometimes thought that the Hogs might be best exterminated by Knurr and Spell. It is true that from time immemorial our Lads have laiked at this great game, simply for the glory of outdriving one another, but they have become so expert at it and can drive with such unerring precision and power that I have had a great vision of them all lined up on the fellsides, knocking the Hogs down like so many ninepins as they snorted along.

WHARFE. A fine vision i' faith, Aire, and seasonable, for it is at Eastertide that the Knurr-men come from their Caves and wield their clubs. None the less, I misdoubt its success; for these lusty Lads are the most roaring wranglers in all the world, and you would no sooner get them lined up together than they would begin wagering their sticks, knurrs, spells, pins, clogs, shirts and all as to who was to have the honour of pulverising the first Hog: or who could hit a Hog at sight or who could account for most Hogs in an hour: or who could hash up two Hogs with one knurr or who could outdrive any Hog on the Road. In short, it would all end in a free fight among your own champions,

especially if any of my own undefeated Lads bumped into yours and did the inevitable.

AIRE. What stuff is this? Has not the fame of my champions girdled the world? Is not my valley the cradle where all the giants of the game were trained?

SWALE. And by our own champions of Northallerton, as History telleth.

AIRE. Go within a stone's-throw of Kildwick Langkirk and you will still see them challenging and beating all-comers—especially the Whard'alers—both from the spell and from the pin: with the three-foot or with the five-foot. I will wager a swarthy Lad I know against all the nincompoops you can rake together. Only last week I watched him paralyse a Lancashire Loon with his huge swipes. I only wish you had seen him swing his great arms about like windmill sails, and bring his five-foot round with all the fury of a cyclone.

Forty-four "lookers" failed to find his little knurr, though they crawled all over the pastures on their hands and knees, and tore up great clumps of grass and gnashed their teeth in their despair. . . .

OUSE. I should like to see him or any other of them pitted against my champion Piggy-player: a man with legs like gammon hams and arms like legs of mutton. I warrant he would shatter their reputations!

WHARFE. It is a pity we cannot assemble them all in that spacious dale below us and settle these rivalries once and for all. But if we cannot agree as to which Riding shall claim the bays, let us at least rejoice that this great gift of Games was bequeathed in such a peculiar way to the County as a whole, so that there is scarcely a manly art—from fell-climbing downward—indeed, for the moment I can think of none—at which one of our Lads does not excel; and that not all the stealth and cunning of the Hogs has so far deprived us of our joint supremacy in the field over the rest of the land.

Let us by all means encourage the Hogs to excel and exterminate one another on their ridiculous tracks while our Lads smother themselves with glory in these nobler arts.

AIRE. As for cricket—and soccer—and rugger.

WHARFE. Mum's the word; lest we fall to the sin of pride.

AIRE (*bawling*). All the more reason for telling the world the truth at last. For I am stalled to death of hearing the praise of those southern coves at the expense of our own Lads. And I want to know——

WHARFE. Quite, Aire. So do we all. But nobody will tell us and so long as we keep on winning the laurels what does it matter? This only will I say: it is a significant thing that in these games, where quickness of foot and eye and hand and all-round agility are of so much account, our men should excel all others.

SWALE. It is thoughts like these that lift me up when I am down; for so long as our Lads continue to practise these vigorous games, there is hope for us on the Road. The Hog may have broken into our cities, but he will never annihilate us utterly.

OUSE. If only we can get them with their backs to a wall —I would not give a pescod for the Hog's chances of salvation.

XVII

SWALE. Nor I for ours, an we do not mend our ways. There, below, is Hawes, where the Hog, alas, is rampant, especially on Sundays and Holy-days. And for myself, I do not well see how we are to get past his defences and win through to the great hills beyond unless we pray here and now to St. Christopher for a safe-conduct.

OUSE. In faith, as I see it, 'tis a fine shield. A Field vert: a Hog rampant: a bend argent——

AIRE. Then you are blind indeed: for I have already counted no less than fifty-nine Hogs rampant, and a bar sinister rather than a bend argent.

WHARFE. All the Hogs, all the bends and all the bars in the dale will not stop us now; for I smell my own lands, and once we are across the valley I will promise to lead you all surely by Oughtershaw Side to Langstrothdale Chase, and so by Yockenthwaite to Hubberholme, where we shall sleep to-night by my river.

SWALE. Be that as it may, Wharfe, we shall not take another stride forward until I have told you the glories concealed in this spacious dale of Yore before us, for we are still happily in my far-spreading Riding, and since we have no Wensleydale Lad with us, I will speak up in praise of this, my sister dale.

OUSE. Am I then to stand here and be talked at and shot at, not to say barged at and charged at, by all the infernal Hogs below, while Swale arrogates to himself the splendours of yet another dale?

AIRE. Am I to stand and starve, who have trudged twenty miles, and tasted neither bite nor sup since early morning?

SWALE. Down there in the valley I will lead you, for the last time, to one of my hospitable inns, and stuff you all like kestrels in a cage; but before we dine, I will first stuff your minds with immortal memories. And, in the first place, you must know that as my dale is the most rugged, the most mountainous and the most incorrupt——

OUSE. Hold! Let us have an end to this rodomontade. If you must brag, brag vicariously for that missing Wensleydale Lad whose lands we are purveying; but not another word about those stony uplands we have left behind.

SWALE. Why, that is blasphemy pure and simple.

WHARFE. There you are wrong, Swale, for there is no such thing. Blasphemy is, in its essence, loathsome, monstrous and unclean. Therefore it cannot be pure. Moreover,

not until Thought becomes confused, entangled and corrupt, can blasphemy breathe. Therefore it cannot be simple.

SWALE. Simple or sinuous, pure or putrid, I shall hold Ouse here until I have told the tale, not only of Yoredale itself, but also of the nine sister dales that feed it with their streams. And I will show how each one of these may be likened to one of the Nine Muses, and is, for aught Ouse knows to the contrary, the present refuge of that timid sisterhood.

WHARFE. In that case, Swale, we should be standing here impetricate at the Crack of Doom, but I, for one, have no wish to die away from my own lands. Let me, moreover, remind you that the artist is known, not so much by what he crams into his story, as by what he leaves out. I will, therefore, make bold to tell the tale of Yoredale myself with that economy of words that distinguishes all great orators.

Know then, honest Ouse and hungry Aire, that this broad dale of Yore, of which you have no more than a hint and a promise here, is said by many to be—and I trust you will hear the news like the chivalrous Lads you are—the most famous, the most historic and the most beautiful dale in all the Shire.

OUSE. I hope you will quote your Authority——

AIRE. What old wives' tale is this?

SWALE. You mean, of course, the Railway Company who defiled it with their engineers.

WHARFE. Make no mistake, I do not ask you to believe these things; I do not myself necessarily subscribe to them. I merely mention them for what they are worth.

AIRE. Nothing.

WHARFE. But this I do say: that this Wensleydale of ours is certainly the most warring dale of all. The Metcalfes, the Scropes and the Nortons were bred in it; Nappa stands in it; Castle Bolton ennobles it; Penhill dominates it; and

Middleham—where Warwick lorded it—guards the eastern approach. And these are only a tithe of its wonders. Indeed, as you walk from end to end of it, you do not so much grope for its glories as fall over them. It is like telling your beads in bed in the dark; the Paternosters, the Aves and the Glorias push themselves between your fingers, and before you have time to yawn, you have run through the whole gamut of the Glorious Mysteries and reached the cross-roads. . . . Here at our back is Hawdrow Force, with its sheer, naked, lovely leap over the Scar. I will say no more lest I say too much. Before us is Bainbridge, with its great green, where every night at dusk from Holy Rood to Shrove-tide they blow the Horn to hearten benighted travellers like ourselves. And hard by is the Rose and Crown, where good ale has been drunken and good songs sung these five hundred years. Beyond is Askrigg and Nappa Hall. I think I would rather have had a Metcalfe of Nappa with us on this great stride than all the other knights and heroes in the Shire, except Norton and his sons. But I will say no more. After Nappa—Aysgarth and the Falls. And over the hither side of the river, standing with its back to the North, is Castle Bolton, where Mary pined—the sternest, pitifullest Castle in all the kingdom.

Swale. But not until a man has walked to it from Grinton over Redmire Moor can he understand.

Wharfe. Beyond the Castle—Redmire, and a swarm of glories; Wensley, with its precious little church; Penhill; Middleham; Scarth Nick; East Witton; Coverham; Jervaulx; Masham; Tanfield; Norton Conyers; Fountains; Ripon, and again the Horn. And so on to Aldborough and Boroughbridge; to the Crown at Boroughbridge, where the old Pilgrimage of Grace came to its untimely end——

Aire. Everything, except you, Wharfe, comes to an end.

Wharfe. I will not dwell on the breadth and spaciousness of this great dale; nor on the noble contour of the companion

hills; nor on the verdurous woods, the rich pastures, the clean-dappled cattle; nor on the beauty of Yore itself. I will not speak of its famous breed of horses on the moors, nor yet of the flavour of its cheese——

Ouse. Hold! For you cannot do better than end on that note. Another word and you will ruin everything you have not said.

Wharfe. It is what rhetoricians call litotes or meiosis—I forget which—but it certainly is the most effective form in face of a hungry and hostile audience. But I will spare you the peroration lest you should fly into a passion.

Ouse. By all the Hogs in Hades, let us push forward and feed or perish like poltroons!

. . . . . .

XVIII

Scribe. I confess I am relieved they have rounded that bend sinister so successfully. Already I see them leaving Hawes behind them and pushing forward like giants refreshed.

Pater. What nonsense is this, I pray?

Scribe. You may well pray: pray for them through thick and thin; in journeys often, in perils of water, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in peril of Hogs at Hawes.

Pater. I will not have St. Paul parodied thus, nor will I countenance any mysterious spiritings-away. Let me know, simply and truthfully, what happened to these blustering Four when they came in contact with the Hogs' legions at last. I hope they did not bolt for it without giving fight: for, if so, I wash my hands of them, and will devote my time more profitably to my breviary.

Scribe. This is no matter of breviary, begging your pardon: but, rather, a question of strategy. Know, wise and magnanimous Pater, that even these rare Lads, being only

Four all told (the slippery Aire included), were no match for the massed might of the Hogs——

PATER. Ho-ho: this is a come-down if you like!

SCRIBE. . . . Were no match, I say, for the *massed* might of the Hogs, though not one of them but would have given his very legs for the chance of distinguishing himself in single combat. Now the Hog, alas—may he be split into ten thousand pieces at the cross-roads—knows nothing of the laws of chivalry: knows nothing of the combat at *outrance* . . . let alone of the arms of courtesy, and, in short, encases himself in his impenetrable mail and roars down on the solitary Walker in droves. Who, then, but a fool would attempt to meet him, end-on, in this wise? Now whatever you may think of these Four Champions, be assured they were no fools; on the contrary, they had the thews of warriors and the brains of philosophers.

PATER. In short, they turned about, there and then, and tottered back to Gunnerside more dead than alive.

SCRIBE. If that be your considered opinion I have certainly laboured in vain.

PATER. I will allow that I expected better things of Ouse: possibly of Swale, and even of Wharfe; but certainly not of Aire. For it is of his very nature in a tight corner to bolt like a fox down a hole.

SCRIBE. Let me restore to these heroic Lads the glory that you deny them. Know, then, that far from bolting like miserable dastards, they strode forward with prodigious strides over hedge and road, pasture and palisade, over Ure itself, by hop-skip-and-jump (since the bridge was patrolled), and so gained their inn before the Hogs had wind of their coming.

PATER. That is all very well as far as it goes.

SCRIBE. It goes, to be precise, to the very middle of Hawes itself, where there is an inn—I name no names—as yet untainted by any hoggish hieroglyph outside: and there it

was that they sat down after their triumphant march and rested, feasted and wined.

PATER. And not one of them was knocked down, bowled over, or otherwise put out of action?

SCRIBE. Not though each Lad of them downed six pints apiece; hacked his way through a leg of Wensleydale Lamb; half a sack of potatoes; four cabbages and a tureenful of beans; not to speak of a noble segment of Yorkshire Pudding as big as a castle-yard; and a whole Wensleydale Cheese——

PATER. I do not doubt they were all heinously guilty of gluttony; but I was not meaning were they damned out of hand in that sense; but rather were they hacked to pieces by the Hogs?

SCRIBE. Why, when the Hogs in the neighbouring inns had an inkling of their arrival, and came to spy on them as they dined, they were so taken aback by their enormous girth, capacity, and, so to speak, horse-power—and, above all, by the inestimable splendour of their prize—that they rushed out into their backyards—some to make ready their engines to abduct the Lads to Headquarters, and the rest to tear through the length and breadth of the Shire telling the great news to all their brother Hogs on the road.

PATER. Yes, yes, and then?

SCRIBE. And then those Lads, recking nothing at all of all the Hogs in Hawes or out of it, or in Hades or out of it, but full of beans for their great stride over Fleet Moss, paid their reckonings like honest men, slipped on their haversacks, and betook themselves once more to the Road.

PATER. And were immediately surrounded, impounded, impaled, dovetailed and, in short, made an end of.

SCRIBE. How little you know of their power and majesty! How little you reck of their great strides! One little Hog, it is true, caught a glimpse of them as they stepped forth, while the rest were struggling with their engines in the backyard —one little Hog, I say, was half-blinded by his vision of them

as they strode past, and he, to his everlasting praise, knelt down with his back to his machine and made an act of perfect contrition for his mortal sins. And as it took him some considerable time, those yare Lads, who had not so much as cursed him as they swept past, were high up in the hills which they loved and which encompassed them in their strong embrace before the Hogs were aware of their loss. For Wharfe, you must know, was now so near to his own lands that nothing could hold him back, and it was as much as the hardy Swale, the puffing Ouse and the exhausted Aire could do to keep abreast of him. And not by the straight Road did he go, but over the fields and the hills, and over the valleys and the little becks until he had his Lads out of the hoggish zone. By leaps and bounds, he led them to that cloud-cleaving, heaven-rending, curlew-haunted Road that sweeps up to Dodd Fell, where I must husband what breath I have and what wit I retain to relate the things that were there told.

PATER. Why, this is short shrift indeed!

SCRIBE. A forty-mile march, I have heard say, is the next best thing to a plenary indulgence; and where there is a clear conscience, there is no need for long confession. . . . In short, the Hogs being passed—are already forgotten, and woman has come into her own at last.

PATER. Here is a Fall indeed!

SCRIBE. On the contrary, the conversation is suddenly lifted to a higher plane, as you shall now hear. . . .

XIX

WHARFE. Certainly, Swale, you are right to let your thoughts run now and again on the beauty of our lasses, and to ponder on the mysteries of matrimony; for it is incontestably our solemn duty—one day—to wed and to beget heirs to whom we may bequeath our extraordinary Heritage of the County, rather than have our race perish utterly.

SWALE. The more so since we are all so small a band!

WHARFE. Even an ordinary Hog-landowner with a paltry hundred thousand acres of purloined land in his grasp cannot rest in his seat until he has assured himself of a little hoggish heir to succeed him at the Wheel. And how miserable he is when Providence with obstinate short-sightedness insists on endowing him with stately daughter after stately daughter to thwart his patriot's zeal!

AIRE. But how much greater is our responsibility who have to bequeath not merely a circumscribed estate complete with That Beautiful Ruin of a Priory—but a whole Shire between us!

OUSE. Cram-full of Parks, Pubs, Pleasances, Moors, Mountains, Manor Houses, Ruins and Rivers!

WHARFE. To say nothing of our drinking rights, feasting rights, swimming rights and walking rights!

OUSE. Not to speak of our songs and legends!

AIRE. The one difficulty is to choose the right maid!

WHARFE. Practical Aire! That, as you say, is the one difficulty; but it is a vast one i' faith, for no maid reared within the confines of the County can be lightly dismissed, just as no maid born outside its purlieus is to be thought of for one moment!

AIRE. That limits the number of possible lasses to roughly one million one hundred and thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and ten, unless we include the one hundred and seventy-four thousand three hundred and eighty-seven widows.

SWALE. Mother of God, defend us all!

OUSE. Certainly, since bigamy is banned, there is much to be said for celibacy.

WHARFE. On the contrary, the more lasses there are, the more reason for each of us to choose a mate when the time comes. But for myself, I think that no man should marry until he has proven himself by walking at least the length

and breadth of his own Riding—better still, of the whole Shire—so that he has a proper notion of his prodigious responsibilities and possessions.

Ouse. Why, then, since we have all of us fulfilled that initial condition, let us now consider what are the chief qualities to look for when selecting a spouse.

Swale. First and foremost we are all agreed, I trust, that she should have a deep and overwhelming love of her native lands.

Ouse. You mean she should realise to the quick that her forelders were the salt of the earth, and that her Family Tree—were any library big enough to hold it down—would put the pygmy privets of modern kings and kaisers so much in the shade that they would seem no more than the weeds that jostle beneath our own gigantic oaks and alders. And, furthermore, that the few living descendants who have not forfeited their succession by selling their souls to the Hogs are the only Lads worth so much as a thought.

Wharfe. That is the least one would expect of them. But hardly less important—so it seems to me—would be the fact that throughout all the turbulence of the years, she had kept a lively Faith; so that she would never look on a broken sanctuary without heartache; never profane such a place by rushing past it in any sort of petrolified Thing and calling it Picturesque or Priceless, let alone Superb.

Aire. All of which goes without saying. Let us now come down to everyday realities: to common living and dying: to flesh and blood: hunger and thirst: age and weariness—in short, to all the more wifely qualities. And for my part I must have a lass not only thoroughly grounded in the geography, history and martyrology of the Shire, but also well-primed in the secrets of the kitchen. I would have her with a touch light enough to turn a Pudding at the critical moment without messing it up into a dreadful pulp. I would have her know how to turn a thorble and a mangle. I would

have her, in short, thoroughly skilled in the most ancient and honourable science of housewifery: in butter-making and bread-baking, in sewing and brewing, in cheesemaking and cheeseparing.

SWALE. I would have her possess a face that would remind me of the lovely saints in the stained-glass windows of our old churches and cathedrals.

WHARFE. I would have her as beautiful as the sunset over my own mountains.

AIRE. I would have her as hardy as a bell-wether, and as faithful as an Airedale terrier.

SWALE. I would have her with a voice like the tinkling of my own little rills.

WHARFE. I would have her with cheeks as sweet as peach bloom, and with hands as soft as thistledown.

SWALE. I would have her with breath like my own violets and with eyes blue as my speedwell.

OUSE. I would have her tend fires as faithfully as those old dames who guard the peat-fire in the Chequers Inn near Osmotherley, which has not been out these two hundred years.

SWALE. I would have her as motherly as my own ewes.

OUSE. But you are all of you forgetting the most important thing of all—whether from a sense of false modesty or false femineity I know not——

WHARFE. You mean?

OUSE. I mean in the matter of legs——

SWALE. LEGS????

. . . . .

OUSE. Legs—or, if you like, legs and feet. For without these—so it seems to me—neither a Paragon of Virtue and Beauty nor a Mistress of all the Arts and Sciences known to man would be of much avail to anyone of us in a crisis.

And by legs I do not mean drumsticks, peduncles or

spindle-shanks: and by feet I do not mean webbed appendages, shuffle-toes, nor yet trotters. I mean legs finely-formed: legs which are a delight to the eye and a proper support for the body: legs shapely, rounded and resilient. I mean feet flexible and free: dancing feet, joyous feet, buoyant feet; in short, Walking Feet. For when I look about me and see the havoc that the Hog and his engines have wrought among even our own modern maids, I am appalled, daunted, put off, and clean scarified. If that goes on, I tell you, the legs of the next generation will have tapered to the leanness of the stork, the heron or the curlew, but with nothing of their peculiar beauty: and the feet will be quite spatulate or tylopod. When I think of this I am more than ever determined to steer clear of them all and walk the Road alone. But could I find a lass with rightly-moulded legs, and satisfy myself that our heirs would be born with a proper foothold in the world, I would face the perilous Steep of Matrimony a vasty deal more comfortably.

AIRE. Do you then propose to go about with a tape-measure and a yardstick in your hand and a pair of calipers in your pocket to measure the circumference of every pair of calves you pass?

OUSE. Know, O Fool, that a glance of the eye is sufficient to an expert like myself.

WHARFE. Even so, you have all forgotten the heart. Not one of you has mentioned the heart!

OUSE. Why, that would follow as a natural corollary.

SWALE. So long as it began to beat in our County: so long as it danced to the rhythm of our rivers, I would go bail for it to-morrow.

AIRE. Has not the great Wordsworth observed:

> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food. . . .
> A perfect woman nobly planned
> To warm, to comfort and command. . . .

Ouse. You are right, Aire, he has; but it begs the question, for there is no mention in it of legs, from beginning to end.

Aire. Nevertheless, I will not have you impugn the only poet I know who has written a poem (and a fine poem at that) in Defence of a Young Lady who had been Reproached for Taking Long Walks in the Country.

Wharfe. Haply we shall yet meet her; this Lass of lasses, perfect in every part, legs and all, though my heart misgives me. Howbeit, let us swear an oath to devote ourselves to this great quest when our march is ended, so that multiply the Hog never so hideously and lankily we shall yet beget heirs to uphold our inviolable rights on the Road.

Swale. There is an old saying in my dale:

> A weddin' a woo, a clog and a shoe,
> A potful o' porridge, away they go!

Wharfe. And a still older custom is ours of hurling an old shoe after the newly married pair—not, as the Hog seems to think, as a mark of derision, but rather as a sigil or charm and a reminder that good luck attends those who put their trust in shoe-leather.

Swale. Better still was our old race for the Bridal Bands; when the fleetest-footed lad in the village had the privilege of removing the bride's garter on the threshold of her home.

Ouse. No Hog's bride would allow such liberties, not having any calf to speak of.

Swale. True, but we have another custom admirably suited to the Hog when the festival is over.

Wharfe. And the Divorce Proceedings begin?

Swale. Long before that smooth road to perdition was discovered we had a way of dealing with such rare evil-doers as had found their way into our dale. And this we called the Riding of the Stang.

Ouse. The same, I take it, as we practised at Leven and elsewhere, on those interlopers who duped our lasses into matrimony?

WHARFE. At Grassington, we too rode the Stang.

AIRE. But never so lustily as at Skipton.

SWALE. All the more reason then why you should revive the admirable custom and set fire to your divorce courts. And the better that you may do so, I will explain how the Riding of the Stang was carried out in my own dale. First, we made an effigy of the bad lad who had maltreated his wife in any way whatsoever; then we stuck it on a cow-pole or stang, gathered our forces together and trailed it round three parishes three nights in succession, firing it on the third night outside the culprit's own door and roaring some such Malediction as this:

*Ah tinkle, ah tinkle, ah tinkle tang,*
*It's nut foor your part ner mah part*
*'At ah rahd the Stang,*
*But foor yan Bill Switch whau his weyfe did bang:*
*Ah tinkle, ah tinkle, ah tinkle tang.*

*He banged her, he banged her, he banged her indeed,*
*He banged her, he banged her, afoor sha steead need;*
*Upstairs aback o' t' bed*
*He sairly brayed her wharl sha bled,*
*Oot o' t' hoose on ti t' green,*
*Siken a seeght ez nivver war seen,*
*Ez neean c'u'd think, ez neean c'u'd dream.*

*Sah ah gat me a few cumarades*
*Ti traal mi aboot;*
*Sae it's hip, hip hurrah, lads,*
*Set up a gurt shoot,*
*An' blaw all yer whistles,*
*Scream, rattle an' bang*
*All 'at ivver ya've gitten,*
*Foor ah rahd the Stang.*

WHARFE. In short, Swale, you rode the Stang as we all did, though in Grassington we used to say:

*He nayther took stick, stain, wire nor stower*
*But he up wi' a besom an' knock'd her ower,*

because besoms came in so handily at Grassington, I suppose. But in any case this is cold comfort for lads who contemplate matrimony; and for the moment it behoves us all to direct our whole thoughts and attention to the purpose of this pilgrimage, and leave the lasses severely alone. For here so well have we walked that we are within an ace of that mystical line which divides Swale's lands from my own.

SWALE. Alack the day!

WHARFE. Make no mistake, Swale! This line is neither so mystical nor so mythical but you shall shortly see enormous changes in the landscape before you.

SWALE. All things—even the rarest and best—come to an end.

WHARFE. Fortunately they are only about to begin. Let us stand here a moment and prepare ourselves for the vision!

OUSE. It is good to stand now and again, and not be for ever straining our necks like draught-horses in the collar.

WHARFE. Puffing, patient and perspiring Ouse! How gloriously you have climbed, how nobly you have followed in our wake: you who were bred to the Great Plain! Posterity will yet ring with your praise; historians will yet glow to relate how you left your own beloved flat lands at the Call to climb these sky-splitting mountains on the heels of your brothers! How you bore patiently the heat and burthen of the day, and even the rebukes of Aire without murmuring: how you listened to the legends of Swale and the words of Wharfe without malice. At least I hope so.

OUSE. By St. John of Beverley, I put my foot down, for I did nothing of the kind. Have I not led the way up hill and down dale? Have I not suited my pace to Aire's windy bellows? Have I not kept you all merry with my songs? Have I not put Aire in his right place and Swale too? And must I now hurl you, Wharfe, into your right place with my right hand?

. . . . .

WHARFE. Ho'd thi whisht!—Listen to the wind, how it roars down the valley! Listen to the choirs of the curlews chanting the litany of the lonely places! Listen to the incomparable music of the mountain tops, blowing about our ears! For here we are on the very roof of the world and within shout of Paradise! Here we stand on the tip of the Last Divide! Here all the guardian pinnacles of the Passes brandish their swords around us and salute us as their peers! Here we brush shoulders with the Immortals! Here we receive the accolade of the Mountain Rangers!

AIRE. Why, where are we?

SWALE. Within one foot of the grave.

WHARFE. Say, rather, on the threshold of heaven or within one foot of my Riding. For I tell you that though I have wandered in far foreign places; have placed my foot on the neck of the vaunted Alps and on the scalp of the high Pyrenees, there is no place in all the world so splendid and sacred as this. There is Dodd Fell—snow-capped and serene—and beyond it Whernside; here, Oughtershaw Side, and in a moment we shall see the lions of Ingleborough and Penyghent and a crowd of swarthy Fells pushing their heads up to out-top one another. Follow me and I will bedizzy you with glories. And you, gallant Ouse, who have footed it so finely, take heart of grace, for we have topped the last rise. Henceforward we march down from the heights to the dearest dale of all.

OUSE. I am all for remaining where we are: for after toiling and moiling up this wild road and finally scalping this ridge, the sensible thing to do is to remain on the heights and dally with the wind as long as we may.

WHARFE. What daftness or poltroonery is this, pray?

SWALE. I think, Wharfe, I can explain. I think it is that honest Ouse having already—and very gallantly—traipsed across my own Riding, cannot bring himself to believe that

there is anything to be gained by turning his back upon it. His soul is, as it were, so overcharged with ecstasies, his eyes so dazzled by a superabundance of Things Seen, that he hesitates to go forward lest he suffer a sharp loss—lest the sudden contrast tarnish his memories. . . .

WHARFE. What claptrap is this—and from you, Swale! Let us push on without further parley, for in this we are blessed above the wandering tribes of old who came within hail of the Promised Land and were denied it. But we not only see it from afar, but shall enter it in a cloud of glory.

AIRE. There is always a sadness as well as a glory in topping the rise and swooping down on the valley. Nevertheless, since my own incomparable dale lies due south of this spot, we shall certainly push on.

SWALE.

> Fain would I dally with the sky
> High as a cloud and as a kestrel high!
> And peer deep down with flashing eye
> Upon that spot—My Home!

WHARFE. Why, here is a miracle that the first vision of my dale has wrought, for, unless I am mistaken, this is the first time Swale has burst forth into a song of his own!

SWALE. You forget, Wharfe, that at the moment my back is turned on your dale and I face my own; and that is only one of fifteen stanzas I have composed since bathing in my river. Nevertheless, I am constrained to keep them to myself lest you or any eavesdropper purloin them and claim them for his own.

WHARFE. I should be loth to kidnap any man's songs: especially such sorry-sounding songs as that, Swale: have I not songs of my own and to spare?

OUSE. Then by all means keep them to yourself; for it seems to me it would be a good thing, when our Fellowship disbands, were each of us to tell the true story of his own Riding, for the amazement of generations yet unborn:

flavouring the tale with his own gushes of song. And for my part I shall call my book *The Salt of the Earth.*

Swale. And mine *The Cream of the Shire.*

Aire. And mine *The Noblest Riding.*

Wharfe. And mine *The River of Paradise.*

Ouse. I will only stipulate that all of you send your proofs to me for revision, so that I can strike out those passages which you have cribbed from me, thereby, I am sure, saving the printer and the public a mort of trouble. But my book will be a Fat Book indeed: as fat as my lands and as rich and plentiful. And men, reading it, will laugh their sides sore to think what a showing up the Historians have at last received.

XX

Wharfe. For the moment, Ouse, I would have you dismiss all such vainglorious notions from your mind, and look to your foothold ere you come a great fall. For we are now beginning the descent in earnest and the light is failing.

Ouse. There is a path straggling over to the west that seems to me smoother and surer and to promise even greater things.

Wharfe. Why, that is but a snare of the devil; for though, up to a point, the path is pure and undefiled and curls round the very toes of our huge Whernside—which is not to be confused with my own Great Whernside and Little Whernside——

Aire. Since it is a mile taller than either.

Wharfe. On the contrary it is but a twoathri feet—nevertheless, I say, no sooner does it join the road, than it is lost beyond hope of redemption, for it leads straight to a strange land called, I think—though I am far from sure—Lancashire.

Ouse. Lancashire? Lancashire??

Swale. A strange name to me.

WHARFE. I have heard say it is inhabited by a strange people, too, calling themselves Lancashire Loons, who speak a barbarous tongue and live largely on cotton, but whether raw or boiled I cannot say.

OUSE. By all means, then, let us plunge south and save our souls; that is, if you know the path.

WHARFE. Know the path, indeed! By the Lord! I do, better than I know my beads—for is it not more important that a man should know the paths and tracks of his own country-side than that he should have paid a flying visit to all the Capitals of the outer world and become contaminated by each in turn?

AIRE. Be that as it may, I have heard flashy men in my great cities say, after a frantic fortnight in foreign parts, that there is nothing like foreign travel for broadening the mind. And certainly they seem to sin more comfortably when they return.

OUSE. I hope I am broad enough, yet I was never beyond the Humber bar. Nor shall I cross it until I have first explored every path and every field, every stream and every wold, and every nook and cranny in my own lands.

SWALE. I hope I am broad enough, but God knows how soon I shall be stunted if I do not get back to my fells.

WHARFE. I hope I am broad enough, and yet it is a fact that I come back liking my own land better every time I cross the seas.

AIRE. I hope I am broad enough: but once a man with a glib tongue and a glass eye—I think he was the devil in an old disguise—spirited me away from my own dale to show me the glittering cities of the outer world. Every third day he let me out of the train and dragged me round a horrible whirligig which he called a great Capital of Europe, until my brain cracked with the strain of it, and my soul shrank up like a shrivelled camomile. Once, too, he led me up into a mountain to show me the inside of a volcano, which

he called Hell with the Lid Off, and I had a great desire to hurl him into his own; but my strength had left me. I hope I am broad enough, but I came back like a starved whippet on a string.

OUSE. And serve you right for being led by the nose!

AIRE. On the contrary, had I been led by that, I should have stayed at home, for it was my sense of smell alone that led me back.

WHARFE. Let us give thanks, not only for our noses, but for our eyes and ears, our feet and hands.

OUSE. Our thick thighs and calves.

SWALE. Our stout knees.

AIRE. Our flexible toes.

WHARFE. Our tough soles and ankles.

OUSE. Our strong strides.

SWALE. Our large hearts.

AIRE. Our willing lungs.

WHARFE. Our broad backs.

AIRE. And minds.

OUSE. Our swelling chests.

SWALE. Our vigorous voices.

AIRE. Our rhythm and our rhymes.

OUSE. Our laughter.

WHARFE. In short, for every bone and fibre, every faculty and attribute of our bodies.

OUSE. And, above all, for our souls!

WHARFE. And let us swear an oath not to be hoodwinked into leaving our Shire again as long as we live, since here is the world in a nutshell and all history in a compendium bound by our own mountains. And here we are in the very heart of this lovely, illimitable land! Land of the ling and the bracken and the broom! Land of the moor and the mountain! Land of the secret riverfalls! Already we have crossed the first feeder of Oughtershaw Beck, and there below you is the bountiful beck itself like a silver dragon.

Beyond is Cocklee Fell hiding Green Field Beck; and the place where they meet is called Beckermonds, where my river is born! And away to the west is Ribble—the little changeling washing the feet of Ingleborough.

AIRE. I hope, Wharfe, you are not crushing Ingleborough in your extravagant embrace; for when Ribble has finished with it, it belongs by priority to me——

WHARFE. Suffice that it stands four-square in Craven, and that our forelders once defied the world on its secure summit. Suffice, too, that we are now within hail of Langstrothdale, and it is curlews all the way to Yockenthwaite.

OUSE. On my soul, I never heard of such outlandish names before.

WHARFE. You astonish me, Ouse; for I thought they were famous throughout the land, in the same way as Cosh Inside and Cosh Outside, Swarthgill, Nethergill, Jeffery Pot and Grainings, High Green Field Knott and Low Green Field Knott, Foxup and Hesleden High Bergh. Not to speak of Cush Rigg——

OUSE. Hold!

WHARFE. . . . And a hundred more such lovely places which I will make known to you as we march along.

OUSE. But not, I trust, with such uncouth names as those, else I shall begin to believe there is something to be said for those persevering professors who are for ever branding your place-names with a foreign brush.

WHARFE. The devil take all professors and brand each of them, too, with the foreign place-name that is peculiarly his own.

. . . . .

For, let me tell you, Ouse, that all these gnarled names are as old as the hills themselves; and they, I trust, are at least as old as the Creation. Mark you, I am not claiming that no foreign professor ever penetrated these virgin parts, nor

that, having miserably failed to purloin anything movable, or even to remain here five minutes after he was found out, he did not sneak back to his own lands across the sea, taking our noble place-names with him, and branding his own disgusting hills, valleys, rivers, villages or hives with them! Not at all! What maddens me is that the professors always profess that it was we and never they who purloined the names—as if we had not names enough and to spare! Take Giggleswick or Appletreewick——

AIRE. All words ending in *wick* are damned out of hand.

SWALE. By'r Lakin! You are not suggesting that wick is a wicked foreign word, are you? Why, in my Riding, wick is a word we have used since the flood. Take the phrase "*as wick as a lop*," which surely came out of the Ark?

AIRE. I am happy to think such a phrase is unknown in my own clean lands——

SWALE. No doubt it is; like all pure speech. Take the phrase "*as wick as a scopperil*," which means much the same thing. Or take the phrase, "*This bangs all 'at Ah've seen i' mah wick*": I hope that is pure enough?

OUSE. Certainly, Swale, any honest man would understand speech so pure and undefiled as that.

SWALE. *Wick* is life: as, for instance, "*Ah want yan 'at's wick—nut a deead un.*" Just as wicksilver——

AIRE. You mean quicksilver.

SWALE. I believe that is the foreign rendering, though to my mind quick is not half so wick as wick.

WHARFE. Whisht! Let us not wage a battle of words else I shall smother you all in a quicksticks with my own forthright folk-speech. So long as Swale is agreed on the origin of the simple word wick, I am satisfied, and I know in my heart that between us we could prove the professors as wrong in all their other derivations as we have proved them wrong in this.

AIRE. All the same, I am bound to add that I once heard

a very learned professor explain at great length that the name of Swale himself was derived, not, as one would think, from the river of that name, which we have just left behind, but rather from the Norse word *Svalga*—*aestuare*, meaning, of course, to flow tumultuously; or failing that, from *Swala* (Teut), meaning gentle.

Swale. God knows I am neither Norse, nor Teut, nor gentle; and, indeed, had I been present when such a tissue of falsehoods was strung together, I would have up and proved it——

Aire. Not until the same learned professor had proved that my own river bore a name as bright and British as anything left unsullied in the language; not until he had taken pains to prove that Aire it was, Aire it always had been, and Aire it would remain, since it could not be bettered —was I to be mollified. But as an extra persuasion, he went out of his way to explain that Aire meant—in common speech—bright and shining, a fact that every decent man knew ages ago.

Swale. Bright and shining indeed! May he live to swallow his own words!

Aire. Then he went on to explain that Wharfe got his proud name from *Garbh*, which is Gaelic, and means rough; or possibly from *Gwru* or *Garu*, which is British, and is, I think, a term of reproach. Failing that, from the Saxon *Guerf*, or else the Roman *Verbeia*, which, as he cleverly said, scarcely concealed the original roots.

Wharfe. I protest this is the most garbled piece of Etymology or Black Magic I ever heard. I only hope you stood up and gave him the lie, if not the black-eye, direct!

Aire. Why, seated as I was, at the back of the hall, hemmed in by puffing, hand-clapping and hurrahing Etymologists, who swallowed with difficulty, it was as much as I could do to take a deep breath and cross myself before he was explaining the christening of Ouse.

Ouse. Odds rabbits! I am sorry to have missed that, though I can picture the scene. For there, at last, he had a river bearing a name as incorruptible as Eden.

Aire. Judge then my surprise, honest Ouse, when this same professor lightly dismissed you as a common changeling with no less than three other names, to wit: *Ewes, Nisg*, and *Wysg*, which is Gaelic and means water.

Ouse. And with that, I trust, you felled him without more ado.

Aire. Why, hardly had I recovered from my surprise than he began taking even greater liberties with our own noble Nidd, which he said might be derived from the Hebrew *Nacash*, meaning a serpent; or from the Celtic *Nathair*, the Danish *Nidur*, or—possibly—from the British *Nedd*, which means turning, whirling and dour water; or else from the Yorkshire word *Nidd* itself (though he was loth to admit it), meaning, as we all know, under or below, hence Nidderdale. But this, he pointed out, must obviously spring from the Dutch *Netherdale* or else——

Wharfe. No, not another word lest we all choke with the spleen. I am only surprised, Aire, that you sat silent through all this and did not, apparently, so much as howl him out of countenance. For myself, even out here in this strong air, my blood boils at the telling of it; and even my toes tingle with shame.

. . . . .

Swale. . . . Or fatigue. For you forget, Wharfe, that—lying foreigners apart—we have been walking nine fierce hours without once bathing our feet: and the moment you can muster sufficient water together, I for one purpose cooling my toes in it.

Wharfe. An you but wait a moment, I shall show you sufficient water to drown yourself in, crusty Swale! For here is Beckermonds, where is water enough for swimming,

and more than enough to lave and comfort your blistered heels.

Ouse. Well, then, since it is too late an hour to swim, let us remove our boots and stockings and plunge our feet into this stripling stream.

Wharfe. Take care, Ouse, lest this same stripling sweep you clean off your feet and hurl you down to the Strid, and make an end of you.

. . . . .

Ouse (*in mid-stream*). You are right, Wharfe, to be on your toes in defence of your noble river, but you are too quick by half at the uptake. For when I called it a stripling, I was paying it the highest compliment of all. This, the child of the two immemorial becks, is, after all, the father of that mighty river of yours which teems so valiantly through the dale, and comes to such an honourable end above Cawood. And how that thought buoys me up as I stand here with my back to the frowning fells and your singing river swirling over my two feet! For I know that this water will yet mingle with my own!

Wharfe. But not so fast! Think rather what a vast tract of land each precious drop must drain ere it reach the sea. Think, too, of the joys that lie before us ere we reach the end. Not Nile nor Ganges, not Tigris nor Euphrates, not Phison nor Gehan can boast such splendid shores——

Aire (*stumbling on a flint*). The devil take it!

Wharfe. I confess, Aire, it pleases me to see you on your knees in defence of this divine river of mine, but I did not expect such a civility from you——

Aire. Make no mistake, Wharfe, no civility was intended. I was only on the point of reminding you of the existence of a far nobler river much nearer than any of the rivers you have just named.

Swale (*modestly*). Unless he means the Jordan, which is

sacred beyond all the other rivers of the world, and washed even Naaman of the Syrians clean, I can only think for the moment of my own Swale——

AIRE. Then it is high time we put on our shoes and stockings and struck out over the hills for Malham, for I begin to realise that you will not believe until you have touched and seen——

WHARFE. Unless, Aire, you can loup like that fine old Dolly Makin of ours, who leapt from the top of Ingleborough to the top of Whernside in one huge stride, I do not see how you are going to do that to-night.

XXI

SWALE. For the moment let us devote our whole care and attention to our feet, which are to support us in this trial. And is not this washing of the feet one of the oldest and most sacred rites of man?

Were not the old Patriarchs always washing their feet? And is not Exodus the first and greatest Pilgrimage of all?

WHARFE. You do well, Swale, to remind us of these things.

SWALE. And shall we who love our rivers ever forget the great dividing of the Jordan; or how that the moment the soles of their feet were dipped in the waters, it swelled up on one side like a mountain, and so let them pass?

AIRE. For myself, I can never read the second book of Kings without being lifted up to the seventh heaven of delight.

SWALE. You mean when David cries out:

*For in Thee I will run girded: in my God I will leap over the wall . . . God who hath girded me with strength and made my way perfect. Making my feet like the feet of harts: and setting me upon the high places. . . . Thou shalt enlarge my steps under me and my ankles shall not fail.*

AIRE. Why, yes, but there is much more besides!

WHARFE. Not all the vaunted scribblers of the world

have written so finely about feet, nor sung such songs as those Prophets and Kings.

Swale. And were not the lame always the particular care of Our Lord? And did He not go about making the lame to walk?

Wharfe. Why, then, let us thank Him for *our* feet, which are healthy and strong.

Ouse. Without them we should be poor indeed!

Aire. I sometimes think that if the indurate Hog could recover the use and consciousness of his feet; if he could become foot-proud instead of purse-proud, the fight would be won.

Wharfe. Certainly not the costliest and swiftest engine of the richest Hog in the world is as beautiful or as wonderful as an ordinary human foot. What symmetry and line is here! What delicate poise! Look at the soles and the heels and the lithe crinkling brown skin that sheathes them, so strong yet so sensitive; look at the incredible comeliness of the toes! Look at the white satin skin of the instep and the blue veins that marble it like little rivers here, there, and everywhere! Look at the cunning curve of the ankle and the gothic line of the giders; look at the blood coursing through it from the heart and back again! Think of the nerves that lie concealed in it: think of its ready obedience to the brain! Think of its power; its fleetness; its rhythmic action on the road!

Ouse. And then think of the trotters of the grovelling Hog, manacled in his oily car.

Aire. Why, no; that is not a pleasant thought. Let us think, rather, of putting on our shoes and stockings lest we be riveted here past the edge o' dark.

XXII

Wharfe. And now to the Road.

Aire. Christ's Cross me speed! That was surely the Guytrash that flew past!

WHARFE. Why, no: nor the Barguest neither; though certainly it moves along not unlike the dreaded Padfooit. But it was none of these.

SWALE. I am certain I saw a thing in white float past.

AIRE. I could swear I caught the clink of chains and the strange roar that presages a doom!

WHARFE. But where were the staring Saucer-eyes?

OUSE. My Faith is strong enough to ward off all such visionary things, and my eyes are good enough to distinguish between a thing on wheels and a dreadful fantasy!

SWALE. Nevertheless that was more like a Barguest than a Hog.

OUSE. Actually it was not even a Hogget, but only a lad, somewhat like ourselves, except that instead of walking he propels himself by his feet on two wheels.

WHARFE. In short, a harmless Pedaller, who is almost as great an enemy of the Hog Major as ourselves.

OUSE. His presence warns us that we are on the Open Road again, and must look to ourselves.

WHARFE. Deepdale is passed: Yockenthwaite is before us, and the Horse Head Pass; let us push on to that inn of Hubberholme and eat and drink it dry.

OUSE. Always provided it is not drunk dry and eaten out already, for that is the principal danger we have to fear from that spectre which so alarmed Aire a moment ago. It usually goes about in droves of ten or twenty, and that one was very likely but the advance patrol of the mob.

WHARFE. For myself, I have no great antipathy to these Pedallers; my only objections to them are that they are tainted, though only in a small degree, with the Speed Mania.

They fasten their feet in gyves, yet make shift to use their legs.

They only touch the Road to mount and dismount.

They splash up gobbets of muck into my face as I stride along on rainy days.

They rush past me down great hills, making a violent commotion with their bells.

They flaunt a mass of medals in their coats.

They always want to be off.

Ouse. They keep their heads down: their backs hunched up like camels: and they get cramp which they richly deserve.

They arrive at the village an hour before the Walker, and eat up all the food and claim all the beds.

They prefer a Temperance Hotel to an Inn and ginger ale to real ale.

They sing strange songs.

Apart from those few blemishes, I do not mind them at all.

Wharfe. Even so, I have detected an earnest look in their eyes when I have discovered them in my dale in broad daylight. I think they have the root of the matter in their hearts, and are only half-way down the slippery slope.

Swale. Why, then, let us be charitable, for who knows but that they will yet join us in our fight for the freedom of the Road?

Ouse. This, certainly, you may say for them: at least they have courtesy which covers a multitude of sins: they will not callously run a man down and then rush on. Always they stop to pick him up and tend him in the ditch.

Aire. For my part I welcome them with open arms if they will help us to drive the Hog to the wall or the ditch.

Wharfe. As for the Hog, if we cannot exterminate him utterly I would have two great ditches dug, one on either side of the Road, where he might grovel to his heart's content. But the middle Road—the High Road—like the Old Road, would be reserved for man on two legs, and for his rightful companion—the Horse.

Swale. But if, as I understand the case, the Hog's only purpose is to rush along from place to place as fast as his engine will allow, I would have great tubes bored in the bowels of the earth where he might exercise his natural

function at will. And at the markets where the Hog assembles, I would have shafts sunk down to the great tube-ways, and an escalator to carry him up or down as he desired. For, depend on it, the plague would soon be wiped out, since left to themselves they would exterminate themselves.

. . . . .

WHARFE. If only I could lead a body of Lads against them, such as left this very Langstrothdale to flog the Scots at Flodden Field, how soon would the fight be won!

And to revive your flagging spirits and help you over the last few miles of this long day, I will sing out old Jackson's ballad as we march along.

AIRE. I, for one, will not listen to a ballad when all I want is beer.

WHARFE. Then shove your fingers in your ears while I shout:

*Now like a captain bold, he brought*
*A band of lusty lads elect,*
*Whose curious coats most cunning wrought*
*With dreadful dragons were bedeckt.*
*From Pennigent to Pendle Hill,*
*From Linton to Long Addingham,*
*And all that Craven coasts did till*
*They with the lusty Clifford came:*
*All Staincliffe hundred went with him,*
*With striplings strong from Wharfedale,*
*And all that Haughton Hills did climb*
*With Langstroth too and Littondale,*
*Whose milk-fed fellows fleshly bred*
*Well-browned with sounding bows upbend,*
*All such as Horton fells had fed*
*On Clifford's banner did attend!*

*Lord Lumley next and Latimer*
*Were equal matched with all their power,*
*With whom was next his neighbour near,*
*Lord Conyers stout and stiff in stour.*

*With many a gentleman and squire*
*From Rippon, Ripley and Rydale,*
*With them marched forth all Massasmshire,*
*With Nosterfield and Netherdale,*
*With tillmen tough in harness store*
*Who turned the furrows of Mitton-field,*
*With hillmen bold from Blackamoore,*
*Most warlike wights, these lords did well.*
*Next them was placed with all his power,*
*Lord Scrope of Upsall, agèd knight,*
*Sir Stephen Bull, with all his power,*
*Was matched next him with all his might.*
*Sir Walter Griffith sage and grave*
*Was with Sir Henry Sherbourn bent,*
*And under Bulmer's banner brave*
*The whole Bishoprick Durham went.*

*The ordnance great anon out-brast*
*On either side with thundering thumps,*
*And roaring guns with fire—fast*
*Then levelled out great leaden lumps.*
*And when the roaring guns did cease*
*To handy strokes they hied apace;*
*And with their total power did press*
*To join with enemies face to face.*
*Then Englishmen a feathered flight*
*Sent out anon from sounding bow,*
*Which wounded many a warlike wight*
*And many a groom to ground did throw*
*The grey goose-wings did work such grief*
*And did the Scots so scour and skail,*
*For in their battle—to be brief—*
*They rattling flew as rank as hail.*
*That many a soldier on the soil*
*Lay dead that day thro' dint of dart,*
*The arrows keen kept such a coil*
*And wounded many to the heart!*

Ouse. A thundering fine ballad, Wharfe, and a pity that the names of those fine lads should have perished off the face of the earth.

WHARFE. There, Ouse, you are mistaken. Over the crest of yonder hills, in my shy Littondale, you may read in the little church of St. Oswald a roll-call of some of those who fought on that field. There is, for example, John Knolle, who went with an able horse and harnish'd, and Abraham Knolle, who wielded his bille, and Richard Franklin, who pulled his bowe: and Adam Langstrothe himself, and Jack Tylson and Henry Bulluk and Dick Clebenger—and only St. Oswald knows how many more besides. But if you should think that chivalry died with them, let me assure you that side by side with that honourable company is a roll of lads of the same blood royal, who fought and fell on a much more recent field.

SWALE. No matter how remote from the common walks of man; nor how securely sheltered in the fastnesses of our high hills—there is no village so small and no farm so obscure but that it sent its lads hotfoot to join that gallant company.

WHARFE. So true is this, Swale, that a man cannot walk through the dales without hearing the hushed footfall of those phantom hosts marching by his side.

OUSE. Over at Sledmere, in my own lands, their imperishable story has been hewn in stone, and so finely that no man can gaze on it without a lump in his throat: I would that you might march with me to pay tribute to them and to that rare Knight of ours who inspired such a memorial before he, too, hasted to join them.

WHARFE. But since we cannot, do you, Ouse, tell us the tale as we march along.

OUSE. Not until you have seen the carven stone and stood side by side with my men at the plough, can you understand; but at least I can tell off the stanzas he wrote for their Requiem. For just as that old ballad of Flodden Field breathed life into dead history, so do these simple lines bring those noble lads back to the wolds they tilled and loved.

*These steans a noble tale do tell,*
*On what men did when war befell,*
*And in that 'fourteen harvest tide*
*The call for lads went far and wide,*
*To help to save the world fro' wrong,*
*To shield the weak and bind the strong.*

*When from the wolds twelve hundred men*
*Came forth fro' field and fold and pen*
*To stand again the law of might,*
*To labour and to dee for right,*
*And so to save the world fro' wrong,*
*To shield the weak and bind the strong.*

*These simple lads knew nowt of war,*
*They only knew that God's own law*
*Which Satan's will controls, must fall*
*Unless men then did heed that call*
*To gan' to save the world fro' wrong,*
*To shield the weak, to bind the strong.*

*Ere Britain's hosts were raised or planned,*
*The lads whae joined this homely band,*
*To Normandy had passed o'er sea,*
*Where some were maimed and some did dee,*
*And all to save the world fro' wrong,*
*To shield the weak and bind the strong.*

*Good lads and game, our Riding's pride,*
*These steans are set by this roadside,*
*This tale your childers' bairns to tell*
*On what ye did when war befell,*
*To help to save the world fro' wrong,*
*To shield the weak and bind the strong.*[1]

SWALE.

*Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine ; et lux perpetua luceat lis !*

OUSE.

*In memoria aeterna erit justus ! Amen.*

. . . . .

[1] Written by Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., for inscription on the Waggoners' War Memorial at Sledmere, Yorkshire.

XXIII

WHARFE. How dark it is, but how rich is the night in stars!

OUSE. And Orion staggering like a tipsy lad about the sky.

WHARFE. But to think we are passing mile after mile of my lands, and only the dim silhouette of the hills to be seen, and the tinkle of my river to be heard! Already we are skirting Strans Wood, and the pines which sentinel the bend: and in a moment we shall reach the inn.

AIRE. Then let us cry out with one voice, *Jubilate Deo!*

OUSE. Nay, rather let us sing with that old Brother Jucundus of mine, whom they boxed up in the vaults of St. Leonard's Priory at York:

In dulce jubilo—o—o—
Up, up, up, we go—o—o.

SWALE (*aghast*). No sober monk would bawl like that!

OUSE. There you are right, Swale, for he was not sober, nor—properly speaking—a monk; but only a lad like ourselves, who had joined that austere Order in a fit of the mawgrums. And heartily did he rue his folly. For the rigour of that life was more than his stomach could stand, so that when York Fair came round, he contrived to elude the janitor and join the revels outside. So well did he succeed that when two holy friars eventually found him, he had an enormous tankard of ale in his hand (a difficult balancing feat for a tipsy lad); but Jucundus was a lad apart and he was going up and down in a great swing-boat, his face ashine with jollity as he bawled out above the roar of the roundabouts:

In dulce jubilo—o—o—
Up, up, up, we go—o—o.

SWALE. I hope he was unfrocked at least!

OUSE. Short, indeed, was the shrift he got when they trundled him home, for he was condemned to be walled up alive in the cold wall of the crypt with only a cruse of

water and a loaf of bread to tide him over the great journey. Yet such is the strength of our York Stingo that they had no sooner mortared him up and prayed for the repose of his erring soul than he began to shove and heave with his broad back until, of a sudden, the wall gave way and he found himself in the cellar again—not, mark you, in the cellar of St. Leonard's—but of St. Mary's Abbey which abutted the other. Now the monks of St. Mary's belonged to the still more severe Cistercian Order, which enjoined strict silence on all, so that when Jucundus lurched up the steps into the refectory, and took his place at the table, they did not so much as say Godden to him, but only passed him a chunk of stale bread and a mug of pale ale, such as they were having themselves. And so tepid was the ale and so bitter the bread that Jucundus was sobered on the spot, and vowed that he would stay with them for ever and do penance for his sins.

SWALE. And serve him right!

OUSE. To his everlasting glory he kept his pledges for a whole twelvemonth—until York Fair came round again, when the devil tempted him a second time, and through no less a person than the saintly Abbot himself, whose cellarer had just died. The Abbot perceiving the stark sobriety of Jucundus, handed him the keys of the wine-cellar and put him in charge. Now you must know that St. Mary's Abbey was as lavish in the entertainment of its guests as it was lean and stingy with its own monks. In short, Jucundus had no sooner inspected the barrels of Audit Ale and Malmsey Wine that they kept in the vaults than he made the prime mistake of mixing those strong waters for himself.

In vain did his parched Abbot and thirsty monks smack their lips and rattle their knives and forks at noon. In vain did the Abbot at last break his own vow of perpetual silence and roar out for his mug of pale ale. But not in vain did they file out in solemn procession and search for Jucundus

in the richest cellar of all; for there he was—as drunk as a lord—bawling out his one and only refrain:

In dulce jubilo—o—o—
Up, up, up, we go—o—o.

The loose bricks were still waiting; the niche was already prepared. There was nothing to do but seize, sentence and seal him up once more.

Now note the miracle. At that very moment the old cellarer in St. Leonard's next door was tapping a barrel for his own friars' throats, when he heard that faint, far-away, yet how familiar refrain! By St. Leonard quotha! Here is a miracle of the first water! And as fast as his legs could carry him—which was not very fast, since he suffered woundily from the rheumatiz—he hied him to his flock, who were just singing a Requiem over their lately-deceased Prior. What else could they do but rush downstairs and just in time to hear Jucundus bawling faintly indeed, but with what tremolo:

In dulce jubilo—o—o—
Down, down, down, we go—o—o.

In a quicksticks they had the wall opened and discovered —no Apparition—but Jucundus in the flesh, a little blowsy and flustered, but still puffing and blowing; with the pure water and the loaf of bread, untouched, by his side. Is it any wonder that they made him Abbot on the spot, for such—they said—was clearly the will of Providence which had preserved him a whole twelvemonth in that living tomb!

SWALE. What monstrous legend is this!

OUSE.

In dulce jubilo—o—o—
Up, up, up, we go—o—o.

That is the name of it, and I would that all legends were as lusty and as mellow; for it is nearly four hundred years old.

SWALE. It is a monstrous libel on our holy monks and friars; and I will not believe a word of it.

OUSE. As for that, Swale, you must remember that Jucundus—properly speaking—was no monk at all; but an obvious misfit. Mortar and stones could not keep him down and twice he burst his mortal bars. Nevertheless they do say he made such an Abbot as never was!

SWALE. As never was indeed!

OUSE. Moreover—he has helped you over the longest mile of the day, and now I look to Wharfe for salvation as sweet as that which Jucundus found.

. . . . .

AIRE. It is an hour since he spoke of an inn round the corner, but I see nothing before us but the beckoning of the Road, and I hear only the brawling of his river over the falls.

OUSE. I am not ashamed to confess that I, too, am richly tired, and my fat legs ache with fatigue.

SWALE. The night darkens, the wind begins to howl, and all the beasts of the field are asleep in the folds, but we plod on under the mocking stars; and my dale seems a thousand miles away.

WHARFE. How now, my Lads! What ingratitude is this! For my part I would not forfeit my fatigue for all the coaches in Craven, for there is nothing I value so highly as this luxurious ache of the body and the rampageous hunger that goes with it.

SWALE. Well enough for you who are within sight and sound of your own, but we who have scaled ridge after ridge through the heat of the day, only to find ourselves stranded in a strange land, must have food and drink or else we starve.

AIRE. Over in my own dale I should long ago have led you across the threshold of some hospitable inn, where your honest hunger would have been appeased——

WHARFE. And where your lungs would have been filled with the manna which droppeth down from the mill chimneys: and, as like as not, you had drowned yourselves in a green mill dam. But here there is but one little chimney and one inn, and it is so small that if you are not careful you will fall over it in the dark.

OUSE. Why, there it is at our very feet!

WHARFE. You are right, Ouse. And since the night is growing wild I will not insist on your sleeping by my banks; rather will I bed you all down in this tiny inn of mine to convince you of the largeness of our hospitality.

AIRE. And suppose we cannot all fit in this Tom Thumb's tavern?

WHARFE. Why then, Aire, you will have to dangle your long shanks out of the window; or else hop over to your own lands.

OUSE. Only tell us, Wharfe, before we enter, what kind of inn is this where we are to entrust ourselves for the night.

WHARFE. Small as it is, it has all the appurtenances proper to an inn. And these are: barrels and firkins of ale; pewter tankards; generous food; roaring fire; a parlour with a langsettle and an inglenook; and, above all, a jolly landlord who sits clumped on his stool in the middle of the parlour all day and half the night hobnobbing with his dalesmen and challenging every man that enters to a wit contest. But God help him if he be of foreign extraction.

OUSE. Then let us enter before all the ale be dowled.

. . . . .

WHARFE (*sings*).

*Come Hubberholme and Kettlewell,*
*Come Cracoe men.*
*Come drive your sheep by road and fell*
*With dog at 'em.*
*Come up and down or round the dales,*
*To follow lonely moorland trails.*
*Come all of 'em!*

XXIV

SCRIBE. Quick, I say, for with such a thundering fine send-off ringing in my ears, nothing shall stop me from pursuing them to Kettlewell with all speed.

PATER. Pursue them first of all into the inn before you talk of send-offs!

SCRIBE. I would only warn you they are already afoot, and if they get the start of me, who am I to catch them up?

PATER. It is no more than a moment since Wharfe lifted the sneck of the George. Am I to understand they were booted out by that hospitable Boniface without bed or breakfast?

SCRIBE. By St. Michael, no! You are to understand that by the mere flick of a page, twelve mortal hours are past, and it is now next morning.

PATER. This is to violate the unities with a vengeance.

SCRIBE. Even so, it is a practice exploited by all the Masters of the Narrative Art: in whose footsteps I am a humble follower.

PATER. Nevertheless, until you bridge that gap a little more satisfactorily, I shall have nothing more to do with these blustering blades.

SCRIBE. I am sorry to hear you say that, since I shall have no option but to muzzle you up again and push on with my story.

PATER. Nothing shall save them at the cross-roads, and it is now most of all they have need of my protection. So far they have marched over the tops, but henceforth they must follow the Open Road.

SCRIBE. At Kettlewell, it is true, they must expect a swarm of Hogs and, Heaven knows, they will need all the protection you can give them, else I gravely fear for their souls!

PATER. Well, then, let me have a detailed account of their

reception and behaviour at that wild inn: and an assurance that they treated Wharfe's challenge with the contempt it deserved.

Scribe. Marry they did! For no sooner had Wharfe introduced his Lads to the dalesmen assembled than a great shout arose, and a great rattling of cans and stamping of feet betokened their welcome. And forthwith foaming pots were set before them; and forthwith foaming pots were drained dry and replenished again. And would to Heaven I had the power to convey even a hint of the flow of soul that followed. But you must remember, most indulgent Pater, that this language that I must perforce use is but a slape-shod, feather-legged thing on crutches to the folk-speech of that jostling company in Tom's parlour. Wharfe and Aire at last came into their own, and brandished their words like cudgels; while Ouse and Swale vied with each other in parry and thrust with the dalesmen around them. Not that either of them understood half of what was said, but from the moment Ouse stood up and recited that old rhyme of his Riding about Elphi Bandy-Legs, he was at home:

*Elphi bandy-legs*
*Bent, an' wide apart,*
*Nea yan i' this deal*
*Awnes a kinder heart.*
*Elphi great heead*
*Greatest ivver seen,*
*Nea yan i' this deale*
*Awnes a breeter een.*
*Elphi, little chap*
*Thof he war so small*
*War big wi' deeds o' kindness;*
*Drink tiv him yan an' all!*
*Him 'at fails to drain dry,*
*Be it mug or glass,*
*Bennot woth a pescod*
*Nor a buss frae ony lass.*

In short, they tippled cans about and sang songs and recited nominies until Tomlad suddenly pulled a long face and defied any man to find another mugful in the cellar.

PATER. Why, that is the revolting tale of Bacchus all over again.

SCRIBE. This is praise, indeed, and they would have slept the better had they heard it! As it was, they had to put up with a dry supper and a dry bed, and every man Jack of them as sober as a Churchwarden.

PATER. That being so, let us know how they composed themselves for the night, and what prayers were said.

SCRIBE. Why, not content with a huggin of prayers, Swale droned out the whole of that sad chant of his which is called "A Dree Neet," but I can only remember a stanza that went like this:

*'Twere a dree neet, a dree neet, for a sowl to gan away,*
*A dree neet, a dree neet, bud a gannin sowl can't stay.*
*An' t' winner shuts they rattled sair, an' t' mad wild wind did shrill,*
*An' t' Gabriel ratchets yelped aboon, a gannin sowl to chill.*
*'Twere a dree neet, a dree neet, for deeath to don his cowl*
*To staup abroad wi' whimly tread, to claim a gannin sowl.*
*Bud laal deeath recks hoo dree t' neet be, or hoo a sowl may pray,*
*When t' sand runs out, his sickle reaps: a gannin sowl can't stay.*

. . . . .

*'Twere a dree neet, a dree neet, ower Whinny Moor to trake*
*Wi' shoonless feet ower flinty steanes thruf monny a thorny brake.*

And that sent them all to sleep with the shivers!

PATER. On the whole, I am glad it is next morning; for they cannot well behave much worse.

SCRIBE. I hope I may never squire a better company of Lads or a soberer. For they were all up with the first lark, and already they have breasted the river and renewed themselves for the day—as you shall hear.

# BOOK IV

## EASTER MONDAY

### I

SWALE. I have a mind, Wharfe, this morning, if it be agreeable to you, to walk a straight sixty furlongs before breaking fast.

AIRE. Nobody will gainsay you, if you have a mind to walk six hundred furlongs before breaking fast; though I for one will not be with you, for I have no stomach for such starvation striding. I had all the fasting and abstinence I needed during the long Lent; and for two pins I would go back to that jolly inn, put my legs under the table, and my teeth into a fattycake or two.

OUSE. Certainly, having emptied the cellars, it is but meet and just that we should eat Tomlad out of hearth and home——

SWALE. Nevertheless, I would have you come, for I think you have need of it most of all.

WHARFE. How so?

OUSE. It is clearly matter of breviary, for while we were all examining that cold little church of St. Michael, with its Roodloft which, somehow, seems strangely bare without its Crucifix—I say, while we were smacking our cold hands in that little church and marvelling on the mystery of the Mass which would have flooded it with warmth and light, Swale stood up by the old font and read his office for the day.

SWALE. There you are wrong, Ouse, for I was reading the Mass of the day; which is the next best thing to hearing Mass.

WHARFE. I trust you took good note of the Introit from Exodus:

*Introduxit vos Dominus in terram fluentem lac et mel : alleluia : et ut lex. Domini semper sit in ore vestro.*

SWALE. May it prove propitious! But it was not until I came to the Gospel, which is taken from St. Luke, that I began to exult in earnest.

OUSE. It is only St. Paul who startles me out of my wits; for he seems to bang me on the head with a cudgel. Yet, when he has finished roaring and rampaging, and knocking me down and trampling on me, how sweet are his secret words! I tell you, in that one canticle of his on Charity he has compressed all the wisdom of the prophets!

WHARFE. And yet, not content with that, he is for ever avowing his own frailties and giving himself up like the rest of us for a bad job!

SWALE. Nevertheless, there is nothing in all St. Paul to animate a Walker like this story from St. Luke. Mark has a hint of it, but it is no more than a hint; whereas Luke clearly relished every detail, as you can perceive by the manner of his telling.

AIRE. I hope, for the sake of the Commentators, he is a little more precise than you, Swale, else I foresee a furlong of footnotes following.

SWALE. He is as plain as a pikestaff. For he relates how two of the Apostles set out to walk to a town called Emmaus, which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem: and how, as they walked, they talked of the dark things that had lately been done there, so that their hearts were heavy within them. And how Our Lord appeared by their side and walked with them on the road, but they knew Him not, though He expounded the mysteries of the Gospel to them and made all things plain. And when at length they drew near to Emmaus, tired and footsore, He made as if He would

go farther; but they constrained Him to stay with them and eat. And suddenly their eyes were opened and they knew Him. . . . And He vanished out of their sight. But they, aflame with their great news, hastened back to Jerusalem to rejoin their comrades. And again He appeared amongst them, and seeing their doubts, showed them His hands and His feet so that they believed. Whereupon He sat down with them and ate of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb; blessed them again and vanished. And they were all filled with an exceeding joy, and endued with an immortal fire.

. . . . . .

WHARFE. It is good for us to remember these things at such a time as this.

OUSE. Does not each of us know in his heart that a man walks very near to God out on the Open Road? Is not every Road a *Via Sacra* since He blessed it with His footprints? And are not we every whit as blessed and as blind as those two who walked to Emmaus and knew Him not?

WHARFE. Yet sometimes when a man walks alone, far from the companionship of men, does not he too hear secret words, and is he not caught up into Paradise?

OUSE. To every man in his hour, such a revelation comes, and no man who has experienced it is ever the same.

SWALE. No matter in what company you meet him, or how low he may have since fallen, there is something in his eyes which marks him out from his fellows, and tells you he, too, has found those footprints on the Road.

WHARFE. But to be out here together—we four—on this day of days! This is to be blessed above all deserving! Surely this is to make one long to cry out *Lauda Sion! Lauda Sion!* again and again and again!

OUSE. Why then, let us all open our throats and sing while the Road is silent and the river babbles its praise!

WHARFE. And since the pure element of water figures so largely in the rubric of this festival, let us sing together the *Vide Aquam*, which is being thundered in all our churches now.

OUSE. For my part I will sing the bass, for that lends itself best of all to my bellows.

SWALE. And I the tenor, for that touches the pinnacle of pure song.

AIRE. But I shall sing the treble like our lusty little choir-lads.

WHARFE. God knows I have no enthusiasm for the alto: but I will chant it for the sake of peace!

II

SCRIBE. How I wish you might have heard them!

PATER. It is enough if they were heard in heaven.

SCRIBE. Make no doubt of it!

PATER. I am certain they made noise enough.

SCRIBE. I will not go so far as to say that the sea saw and fled, or that Jordan was turned back, but I do say that the mountains skipped like rams and the hills like the lambs of the flocks. For there was that delicious *lift* in the air that makes a man feel he is treading a cloud.

PATER. And the dalesmen, the shepherds—the *Hogs*: were they likewise affected?

SCRIBE. Why, you must remember that the dale was still sleepy-eyed, so that they were in Buckden before a soul was astir. Even so, long before they reached the Buck, Wharfe was beginning to get uneasy, and—in between the bars—kept turning his head to left and to right and making despairing gestures with his two hands. By the edge of Rakes Wood, where the Stake path begins the climb to Cray and beyond, he was bobbing up and down like a boggle; but none of them paid the smallest heed to him.

PATER. That was not neighbourly.

SCRIBE. As for that, you must remember they were all bawling at the top of their voices; and they were rich voices, deep voices, full voices, lusty voices and gleeful voices—louder than forty foreign choirs; you must remember, also, that they were chanting the joyful anthems of the Church and that their enthusiasm knew no bounds. Why, Ouse alone made noise enough to have lifted the roof off York Minster; and Aire, not to be out-thundered, opened his mouth so wide and drove his bellows so hard, he had like to have been heard at the other end of Craven. So they marched, four abreast, past Buckden Pike, past Knuckle Bone, past Tor Mere Top, past Lord's Wood, past Old Cote Moor Top, past Starbottom—where the lads and lasses came running out of their beds to stare at them open-mouthed—past the Fox and Hounds——

PATER. Not past a pub surely?

SCRIBE. It was closed for repairs to the pump-handle. . . . Past Hall Ings Ho——

PATER. Hold, I will not have this noble dale scamped like this!

SCRIBE. That, I am convinced, was exactly Wharfe's grievance could he have formulated it; but what could he do but lift up his voice with the rest? For, after their legs, they loved nothing so much as to exercise their throats, which were always kept well oiled for that purpose. You must know, too, that there is nothing under heaven so glorious as to tramp the Road at early morning singing songs. And Wharfe knew that the marvellous beauty of his dale had so intoxicated them that nothing short of a rout of Hogs could sober them down. No sooner, therefore, had they finished one anthem, than Ouse intoned another; and from anthems they passed to ballads; and from ballads to shanties; and from shanties to songs of their own brewing, so that they were on the fringe of Kettlewell before their voices began to crack and they stopped for lubrication.

PATER. Not, I trust, for barley-oil at this time of day!

SCRIBE. Why, no: since there is a time for all things; and, at that moment, nothing would serve Wharfe but that they should sample his trout, which, as you know, are the most ticklish and luscious in the land. How he landed a score of them all within five minutes of kneeling down, I am not able to tell you, for there is nothing the satiated Hog loves better than a plateful of up-river trout for his breakfast, and nothing he so angles for in vain. Suffice it that Wharfe received his own and leading his Lads into an inn . . . had the fish garlanded with fresh watercress and licked up in a quicksticks.

PATER. Which inn?

SCRIBE. Wild horses would not drag the name from me.

PATER. Nor *Race Horses* neither?

SCRIBE. Nor *Bluebells* nor *Kings' Heads* on chargers. Enough that it guards the approach to the main bridge over which most of the Hogs come snorting and roaring; and (at that time) did not brandish any of their sinister signs over the lintel. Picture those Lads sitting in the parlour smacking their lips over the trout and smoking their pipes afterwards, with their eyes fixed on the bridge-head beyond. And as they watched, it rained. It rained as it only can rain in those high dales. It rained cats and dogs: it drummed against the window-panes; it rained as if the floodgates of heaven were opened for the first time since the deluge; it rained fiercely, persistently, doggedly and overwhelmingly. And they were pleased.

PATER. Pleased?

SCRIBE. Pleased, for then they knew that Providence was watching them and had sent them a redoubtable ally. For next to the wind the Hog hates nothing so much as the rain, especially the barbed rain which stings the face like arrows. Extraordinary are the precautions he takes to fend it off, if by evil chance it surprises him on the Road. If he is

a rich Hog with greasy wads of money in his bank (and most Hogs are cursed with that) he sees to it that his Thing is as near rainproof as the hand of man can make it, so that he has only to press a few springs to be completely sheltered like a hedgehog. Even so, it maddens and depresses him to see the rain beating against his window-panes, while he cowers in a corner of his cage and curses the day he was born. But if he is only a middling rich Hog, he has to make shift with a Thing which is open to the sky and only by excessive tugging and lugging can he unfurl a complicated paraphernalia to screen himself. Worst of all, if he is a Hogget all he can do is to festoon himself in a monstrous diving suit complete with goggles and helmet, and make the best of a bad job. Now, since the Hog is essentially a lumpish kind of animal with no stomach at all for a drenching, he stays in his sty whenever the Hog oracles portend a deluge. But if the oracles lie and he has the bad hap to be caught in it, all the fight is knocked out of him straightway, and his one desire is to hide at the first opportunity. For even the Road, which he flatters himself is his servant, turns against him at such moments and sends his wheels skidding here, there and everywhere like devils bewitched——

PATER. Even provided that devils can be bewitched—what has this to do with those Lads lurking in the bar parlour?

SCRIBE. Everything. . . . For when no more than three inches of rain had fallen, the bridge-head, instead of being jammed with jostling Hogs, was deserted; and the Road likewise; so that Wharfe and his fellows sallied forth and had it all to themselves!

PATER. And so took to their heels and made good their escape?

SCRIBE. By St. Christopher, no! And so strode forth and stood stock-still in the middle of the bridge proclaiming the rights of Man Two-Leggèd in the teeth of all the Hogs in hiding. But let Wharfe tell his own tale!

PATER. What, again?

SCRIBE. Swale has had his day, Aire has said his say, Ouse has given it up as a bad job: now it is Wharfe's turn.

III

WHARFE. . . . And so, my Lads, before you are decimated one by one, I would have you stand here in this ampler air to survey my hills. . . .

AIRE. Decimated, did you say?

WHARFE. Aye, decimated, Aire, for I cannot believe we shall be left much longer in unchallenged possession of this Road. Even at this moment something tells me that a horde of disconsolate Hogs spies on us from those windows opposite.

AIRE. Let us then push off over the tops again to my own secure fells.

WHARFE. No: that would be too like retreat. And so long as the rain lashes the Road and drives into our faces, the Hog will not dare attack; but the moment it fines up he will be upon us and we must be prepared. Two roads then are open to us—and to him; one on either bank, and, as a last resource, there is a footpath down by my own banks all the way to Kilnsey.

OUSE. Let us rejoice that the footpaths are still inviolate, for even the cunningest Hogs have not yet discovered a means of roaming over those ramshackle stiles that guard our pastures.

SWALE. And is not every path protected by that grim sign:

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.

WHARFE. True, Swale, only the trouble is that there are scarcely any honest, two-legged trespassers left, so that the sign should be altered to read:

HOGS WILL BE ELECTROCUTED.

AIRE. Small hope of that while they continue to carry all before them. It is only a matter of weeks before they will

have corrupted even our sturdy Rural District Councils, and when that happens you may expect to see new signs and wonders everywhere displayed: such as:

TRESPASSERS ON FOOT WILL BE EXTERMINATED:
MANTRAPS, GINS AND PITFALLS ARE EVERYWHERE
CONCEALED.

BROTHER HOGS!!
YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO ESSAY
THIS SECLUDED AND SEDUCTIVE PATH
£100 REWARD FOR THE FIRST HOG
TO SMASH ALL THE STILES
FROM THINGUMMYBOB TO THINGUMMYJIG
SIGNED: HELL, SHELL AND YELL,
INSPECTORS-IN-CHIEF.

OUSE. You are right, Aire. Only this morning in the parlour of that inn I was horrified to read the latest HOLIDAY CASUALTY LISTS, and dumbfounded to read the casual way in which the Hogs were exonerated from all blame.

WHARFE. Even Park Rash, that noble track that rears up from Kettlewell, is fallen, is fallen . . . and every Saturday afternoon the Hogs charge at it like the devil's artillery.

AIRE. And not content with that, the Hog Yardstick Authorities stick up a bragging little god of their own at the top of all our hills with the height brazen on his little pate, as if it belonged to them.

SWALE. What height?

AIRE. The height of impudence——

WHARFE. Even so, they cannot take the *tops* from us; they cannot go swarming up the fellsides scalping peak after peak: they cannot follow our sheep-tracks and goat-tracks nor our old foot-tracks from one dale to the other; they cannot take Great Whernside in their stride and slither down Little Whernside into Nidderdale. They cannot pick

their way between Ramsden Pike and Tor Top, and so to Waldendale. They cannot charge over the Horse Head Pass in a mist from Halton Gill to Raisgill; they cannot pick their way from Conistone over Dib by Black Edge, and Priest's Tarn to How Stean; they cannot shoot up Penyghent nor yet Ingleborough side before breakfast as we can.

SWALE. We should like to see them try. . . . Or from Hell Gill to Keld at the edge o' dark!

AIRE. Or from Withins to Widdop!

OUSE. Or a hundred more such crossings too secret and sacred to breathe aloud lest they reach the ears of the Reliability Trial Promoters——

WHARFE. By my boots and staff! we should like them to let well alone, or it will go hard with them. For up there we have our faithful allies who would bar the way or shove them down a pothole. If only those moormen were with us now! But they are not fitted for the Road. Up there on the tops they have to "lift" high, so that their feet are all at sixes and sevens on the hard Road.

OUSE. So, too, will ours, if we do not push off. . . .

WHARFE. Well, then, let us go forward on this Road to death or glory, though I would have had you climb Great Whernside with me and sit down on Soldier's Pike to survey the Kingdoms of the World below you. I would have had you follow the track which leads to Coverdale and Wensleydale: I would have had you explore Douka Cave, which is buried underneath Whernside and where, some day, I will assemble a whole regiment of Foot to swoop down on the Hogs and make trotters of them all. I would have had you see a hundred things that you can see nowhere else in the Shire, were not the times out of joint. As it is, you must lift up your eyes as we march along and see my dale expound its eloquent lesson on every hand.

OUSE. A' Godsname, then, let us go before we are ambuscaded.

WHARFE. Above all, I would have you observe how my scarred and aged walls go shouldering their way sheer up the face of the fells like neighbourly dalesmen who have weathered many storms. I would have you think of them as friendly guides linking dale with dale, and I would have you marvel at the strength and patience of my old wallers who made and mended them in the teeth of the fierce tempests that do rage there.

AIRE. But I, too, have just such walls as these, though I think, under correction, they are a little whiter and finer-looking around Settle.

WHARFE. It pains me all the more to have to correct you, for these are certainly the finest walls in England, or, for that matter, in the world.

SWALE. Have we then fallen so low that we must listen to the pair of you fratching about walls?

OUSE. Is thought so thin that you must hurl bricks at each other, and wage a tedious war about stone?

AIRE. It was Wharfe began it!

SWALE. Nay, you are both marrow-to-bonny.

WHARFE. I am astonished, Ouse, that you should confound brick with stone. I hold no brief for brick with which Aire builds his horrid red cities and then forthwith pours smoke on them until they are black and nasty. But stone is the backbone of the Riding. Of few things am I so proud as of my wealth and variety of stone. Look at those rude shepherds' huts poised on the tip of the ridge and buffeted by every wind that blows; yet still four-square to the sky!

AIRE. At a glance I should say they were made of Millstone Grit, or possibly of Yoredale rocks, or perhaps Silurian.

OUSE. Or else of Oolites or Lias.

WHARFE. Liars certainly, both of you; for let me tell you that these old walls of ours are built of none of these things, but rather of an immortal stuff deposited here at the backwash of the Flood which no geologist has yet rightly classified.

For it is well known that the Flood played ducks and drakes in these parts, and there are wise men to-day who will tell you that Kettlewelldale came through that searching ordeal so well that it is none other than that Valley of Jeosaphat itself, wherein all men will one day assemble to be finally judged.

SWALE. This is news indeed.

WHARFE. Great news, but I will not brag of it, rather will I ask you all to prepare yourselves for a sudden view of another relic of that terrific deluge, lest coming upon it without warning you might take it to be a petrified Hippogriph; a colossal Crustacean; a Griffin; a Minotaur, or even a Proboscidiferous Dinothere—whereas it is none other than my incomparable Kilnsey Crag itself!

AIRE. How tall is this swaggering lump?

WHARFE. Huge beyond computation: laughing at yard-sticks it beetles gigantic over the dale—a menace and an amazement to men: especially to wicked men since it still bears the marks of the great biffing it received at the Flood. For the waters roared past the face of it from the north—gouged out Langstrothdale and Littondale: then subsided, and left Wharfedale with all its wonders. And it was worth it.

OUSE. Worth what?

WHARFE. The inconvenience of a deluge, as I hope to prove to you as we march along. Indeed—Hogs permitting—we shall stick to this Road until we pass right beneath Kilnsey itself; a thing no Hog has ever done without flinching, for this towering crag of mine opens its great jaws as if to gobble them up alive at a sudden signal from Heaven, while from its green sides gush four springs in dreadful remembrance of that far-off cataclysm.

SWALE. Never before have I heard tell of these diluvial remains, though I hope I have read the Scriptures as zealously as Holy Church enjoins.

WHARFE. All the more reason, Little Swale, why you

should forsake your narrow dale and see the signs and wonders by the wayside. Mind, I am not asking you to accept as an article of Faith, the belief locally entertained that the little tree which juts out of the brow of this crag is the identical tree on which the second dove out of the Ark settled.

SWALE. That was an olive-tree with green leaves, in the region of Armenia.

WHARFE. That the Ark itself was beached on a mountain in Armenia I do not deny: for it is so written in Genesis; but I have looked in vain for any reference to the exact location of the tree; and this little tree of mine seems to us as likely as the next.

OUSE. Let us have an end of this nonsense, lest Providence be tempted to send a second deluge to drown us all where we stand, and, indeed, if this rain continues, I begin to think we shall have to swim for it yet.

WHARFE. Have no fear, honest Ouse, for if the worst comes to the worst, I will hide you all in the depths of a great Cave buried above, as safe as any Ark; and when all is over and the Hogs have been hurled to their doom, we shall emerge to bury them in a great pit and come into our own again. But, greatly as such a consummation is to be desired, I would not have it come to pass until you have first tramped through my dale. Come to that, I am well pleased that it should rain like this, for the time to see rivers is when they are in spate, and the becks creaming the hillside with their froth and the waterfalls streaking the fells as with marble.

AIRE. But I am soaked to the bone.

WHARFE. And how richly you deserve it!

AIRE. And for why, pray-a-dame?

WHARFE. For sulking along like a mule with your tail between your legs, and a snaffle on your tongue, because you cannot thoil to praise my scenery.

AIRE. For two pints I would strike out over the fells until I came into my own.

WHARFE. Most certainly you would perish on the way; for even could you find your way over Hawkswick Moor, you would have to cross my swirling Skirfare: a slim river, but very fast! Or even if you made the bridge at Arncliffe, you would still have to fight your way over Nab End and so past Fountains Fell to the Tarn.

AIRE. Blindfold me, and let me go, for I will wager to finding my Cove by the sense of smell alone.

OUSE. By my troth, a kittle compliment!

WHARFE. No man has ever paid my sweet air a higher.

AIRE. Pest on you all for a pack of lumpish dolts.

SWALE. It is written: Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man.

WHARFE. And all for a sweet drop o' rain!

AIRE. God knows I did not mean to be nasty, but I am soaked through and through.

OUSE. Some folk is that grumenly they awlus hev a stean in their shoon.

WHARFE. The fact is, Aire, you are slape-shod and on your last legs. And serve you right for insulting the Road with cheap shoes. Heaven help you if we have to seek refuge in the fields when the Noonday Devil gets on our track!

OUSE. Let us take heart of grace, and stand our ground, though all the Hogs in the Kingdom come out to meet us!

WHARFE. And if the worst comes to the worst, there are always the noble Arms of Kilnsey for an inspiration and a refuge.

OUSE. I confess they are new to me, though I know the Arms of the Shire as well as Swale knows his Bible.

WHARFE. I was not thinking of Heraldic Arms, but rather of the "Tenant" Arms and the "Anglers'" Arms—both of them tried and trusted pubs of mine, which stand not combatant, nor couchant, nor dormant, nor embowed, nor

haurient, nor issuant, nor jessant, nor lodged, nor naiant, nor naissant, nor passant, nor passant-regardant, nor preying, nor rampant, nor salient, nor sergreant, nor trippant-counter, nor varant, nor vulned, nor even Vulning Themselves—but rather Respecting Each Other with their backs to the Crag under the protection of their own Man, flaunting their shields over their doors: each with its own motto which interpreted means:

ALE AT ALL HOURS.

OUSE. Let us by all means examine these curious Arms, and satisfy ourselves of the truth of their motto.

WHARFE. The moment you have tasted their ale all your doubts will vanish like a cloud; but, first, I would have you cross the fields with me here, and see my swift little Skirfare race to embrace her mother; for, though I can never forgive her for jalousing to herself that noble lad who sang the Songs of the Riding, yet must I love her in spite of all.

SWALE. Who knows but that in embracing death so nobly he had his heart's desire? For had I my choice of all the deaths died by men, it is such an one that I, too, would choose.

. . . . .

IV

SCRIBE. Now, it is an extraordinary thing, my tongue-tied Pater, and a matter at once for wonder and thanksgiving and, in a large measure, I am sure, directly due to your thundering blessings and prayers—that no sooner had these Lads left the Road by that little stile before Skirfare Bridge for the peace of the pastures, than a rainbow spanned the sky from fell to fell, and the rain ceased.

PATER. Surely there is nothing wonderful about that, since rainbows are as common as bugs the world over.

SCRIBE. But, when I tell you that this particular rainbow

was the Signal for which all the Hogs from Kettlewell to Kilnsey had been tremulously watching, and that, all in a minute, that road became infested with huge bodies of Hogs bent on out-hogging one another, you will agree that those Lads were in a very particular way in charge of the angels.

PATER. Then why turn tail? Surely this was the moment to make a stand, and take their cue from St. Michael, who advanced boldly towards the monstrous hordes of Lucifer and smote them hip and thigh.

SCRIBE. I cannot follow the parallel at all. In the first place, St. Michael in that great fight had legions of angels at his beck and call, all brandishing flaming swords, whereas my Lads were four against the world; and in the second place, Lucifer stood up on his hind legs, whereas the Hogs advanced on wheels, and hid behind their engines. And to dispose of the slur once and for all; my Lads were not turning tail, since, unlike Lucifer, they had no tails to turn. Rather did they step out lustily along their old right-of-way, the more so since it was defended with the comforting sign warning Trespassers that they would be Prosecuted; rather, I say, did they push on to the meeting of those swift waters and there solaced their souls.

PATER. I am happy to think that for once in a while they were satisfied with water.

SCRIBE. But such water! Wharfe, indeed, was all for plunging into the whirlpool there and then, and swimming to the falls, but Ouse and Aire and Swale would have none of it, and dragged him back. Back to the footpath or right-of-way; back to the stile that guards the Road; back into the very Arms of Kilnsey itself.

PATER. And the Hogs? . . . Am I to understand that the Road was tunnelled, and that your Lads crawled beneath it like poltroons on their hands and knees?

SCRIBE. By St. Christopher, no! Patience and I will unfold this mystery. Certainly, when they reached the last

stile and saw the Hogs whizzing past like so many cannon balls, they were momentarily appalled; but when they saw the Hogs ducking in terror of the Crag, courage filled their hearts, and they determined to cross that Road and reach the inn (and the ale) or die the death. Now, when the Hogs caught a glimpse of these giants straddling the wall, a new terror seized them, and shutting their eyes they gave themselves up for lost. For now they were trapped between two dangers, the Crag on the one side and the Lads on the other: either of which might crash down and squash them flat. Here was a chance for my Lads to prove the mastery of the foot over the machine. I have heard say that a matador dancing before an onrushing bull is a sight to drive a Spaniard to frenzy; but imagine, if you can, the spectacle of these four fleet-footed Champions defying a whole herd of rampaging Hogs! Imagine the nice foot-work and daring of them! Imagine the fat legs of Ouse, the long shanks of Aire, the swift feet of Swale, the watchful eyes of Wharfe, in action together, under the steaming nostrils of their panic-stricken foes! And then tell me St. Christopher is returned again!

PATER. I like your impudence!

SCRIBE. But it was as nothing to the impudent entry of those Lads, unscathed, to the inn; and their impudent brag as they tossed full tankards about, safe again on their frithstools.

PATER. But it will go hard with them when they come out—unless, indeed, they make a night of it, and fly the encounter.

SCRIBE. Four pints apiece, and not a tankard more, was all they quaffed, but it was more than enough to get them safely within hail of Grassington; by what means I know not, since, Heaven forgive me, I was too dazed myself to see clear.

PATER. I am the more determined to have the truth, else I forswear the whole pack of you.

Scribe. Cudgel my brain as I may, all I can conjure up is a blurred vision of them stamping out of the inn parlour defying all the Hogs in Craven to do their d—dst. Conistone bridge comes and goes like the swing-boat of jolly Jucundus, up and down, down and up; and a great stile as steep as Jacob's Ladder invites me into a field! After that, peace, perfect peace, descends upon me, broken at last by the booming of Wharfe on the first falls. And then the pine woods cleave the sky and I hear Wharfe droning like a wheezy organ.

. . . . .

v

Wharfe. You do well, Ouse, to praise that proud belt of pine pricking the sky beyond us. Grass Woods, we call them, and for myself I never look on them from afar without seeming to see the spears of all the Chivalry of the North brandished above me. It is as if those tall and stately trees assumed human form, and it would not surprise me to see them suddenly march off in splendid companies with flashing arms and crashing fanfares to Kettlewelldale: there to be glorified in the face of all the peoples of the world. Clifford the Shepherd Earl is there, and all the lads who flocked with him to Flodden Field. The forty thousand who followed Aske on the forlorn Pilgrimage of Grace are there. . . . Knights, Squires and yeomen bold, who flourished bows or billhooks at the Call. Metcalfe and his three hundred on their white horses—these and thousands on thousands more, I see quietly waiting the Horn. Norton and his eight sons are there, quivering at the black tyranny assailing them. All the bravest knights who sallied out of Skipton, Richmond, Barden, Middleham, Knaresbro', Scarborough, Pickering, and the rest, are standing side by side. . . .

Aire. But if the Nortons are anywhere at all except in

the high places of Paradise, I think they must take their stand with their retainers at Crookrise hard by the crumbling ruins of their old Watch Tower on Rylston Fell. And that, I think, is the most pathetic relic in the Shire, for it stands in the heart of Craven facing Flasby Fell, and from its broken walls a man can see through his tears to the uttermost ends of the earth, while lifted high over it as if in benediction hangs the great Cross of Cracoe, which I have clasped with my own arms.

And while I think of it, I will tell you the beautiful legend of the Norton maid and her white doe, which springs from those parts. First, I will give it in the immortal words of the great Wordsworth. Then——

WHARFE. God forbid that you should squander your breath on a story that is so peculiarly my own, and, indeed, did we not all know it already, I should have told it long ago. As it is, I will rather tell you the story of the building of Grassington itself, which lies ahead, since its birth has long baffled not only the poets, but also the annalists, who have exhausted themselves and their readers to account for its high antiquity and, you might say, aloof position.

. . . . . .

For Grassington stands so high in the dale that it almost seems to be running away from the world and its researchers and, more remarkably still, from my river. And yet the reason of it, as is usually the case with great mysteries, is very simple. It is all a question of how came the first cottage to be built; and this I am able to tell you, having had it from the lips of a great-great-great-grandson of the very man who, so to speak, threw the first stone. Tom o' Dick o' Bob's it was who threw it, and he was the recognised Duckstone Champion of the dale in his day. As a matter of fact, Tom and his cronies had been indulging in the sport

on the river-banks below, when they fell into an argument as to who could hurl the farthest stone. Lad after lad tried his hand in turn, before Tom o' Dick o' Bob's lifted a finger; and not until a swaggering smith from Cracoe—with a neck like a knur-laiker—began to duff him, did he roll up his sleeve, uproot an enormous lump of limestone, balance it nicely in his right hand, and then hurl it over the hill like a thunderbolt of the devil. Whereupon every man Jack of the school fell flat on his face and began to eat grass in a horrible fear, expecting the stone to crash back at any moment and crush them all to a pulp. But Tom o' Dick o' Bob's only spit on his hands like a true champion, and defied any man to beat that! No man stirring, he uprooted a second stone, took aim, and hurled it smack in the first stone's face. Thoroughly pleased with himself and his handiwork, and full of the true artist's frenzy, he hurled a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, in short, a thousandth stone—all in the same direction, yet so cunningly directed that out of Chaos, Form appeared. Whereupon—for he worked quicker than I can speak—he kicked those grass-eating, belly-quaking lads each shortly on the buttocks, bid them look up, and lo!—a cottage on the heights appeared! Dry-walled, I grant you, and lacking as yet windows, door, knob and barrel; but still a cottage with chimney-pot and all complete for Tom to live in. And Tom, feeling the need of repose after his exertion, trudged doggedly up the hill, entered his house, and promptly fell fast asleep. Whereat those astonished lads suddenly found their courage again, and creeping shamefacedly half a mile higher up the hill, they too began hurling stones, one after the other, in like manner.—Not at Tom's cottage, for they were too fearful for that, but rather one stone on this side and another on that. . . . In short —for actions speak louder than words—when Tom o' Dick o' Bob's awoke, and stepped outside for a breath of fresh air,

lo!—a street and a whole row of cottages—pot-valiant, yet how companionable—winked at him from either side! And that was how Grassington, or Gruston as we call it, was born.

SWALE. I hope, Wharfe, you are prepared to quote your authorities.

WHARFE. Authorities, indeed! As to that—simple Swale—there are Two Schools of Authority, one for Lies and the other for Truth. And the first kind is usually to be found slinking inside a black book, tricked out in abominable small print to dazzle a man's eyes, and accompanied by a farrago of footnotes to give him a headache so that he will believe anything, to be done with it.

The other kind is usually handed down by word of mouth from father to son and from son to grandson, through generation to generation, and this is the only Authority I care to think about. I speak by word of mouth and stand or fall by simple faith and honest good. And would to Heaven you could all say the same.

OUSE. For myself, Wharfe, having already clapped eyes on the peculiar place called Booze, I am prepared to believe that all your crazy cottages were constructed on the same principles: but my own trim little homesteads and villages are another matter.

AIRE. He lies, Ouse, he lies! For having seen this village of Grassington with my own eyes, I do avow it to be a plain, strait-jacket, spread-eagle sort of place, hemmed in by the worst examples of the Suburban School of Architecture.

WHARFE. I hope, Aire, you can still recognise the Truth and the Pure Beginnings of Things, even though they are buried beneath a bushel of hogwash. For, though since the Hog discovered this primeval place it is not quite the same, I would only ask you to dig deep enough to discover the first foundations.

SWALE. Grassington, it is true, might well be a corruption of Grasseatingtown, but my heart misgives me.

. . . . . .

WHARFE. Why, then, I have neither time nor intention to hunt up my outspoken authorities to convince such crawling sceptics. Rather let me prepare you for the wonders ahead. For here we are at Ghaistrills, where my brawling river begins to show the stuff it is made of; and in a few strides we shall be at Grassington Bridge, and by the same token, in a quandary.

OUSE. How so?

WHARFE. Because, Ouse, we shall have to choose between three enchanting tracks, always provided we are not ambuscaded by the Hogs the moment we leave this right of way.

AIRE. Then why leave it?

WHARFE. Because, Aire, we are about to march through ten of the loveliest miles in the Shire, and whether we take the high road through Hartlington and Appletreewick or through Linton and Burnsall, or whether we stick to the river-side all the way to Bolton Priory, I am determined you shall all see these incomparable lands before you are struck down.

OUSE. For my part, I have wrung a promise from my guardian angel not to let me perish until I have set foot again on my own soil.

SWALE. Take care, Ouse, lest your guardian angel confuse the boundary-line of the Ainsty and plant you in an alien grave.

WHARFE. First we shall make a dash across this great bridge, pick up the path again at the other side, and pursue it just so far as it suits my own purpose, and neither more nor less. For here you are in the heart of my dale, and if I cannot choose the route, it is a strange fellowship forsooth.

SWALE. At least I hope we are going to explore Grassington?

WHARFE. That would be all too sudden death, since the Hog assembles there to pay homage to its peculiar airs

and graces all day and all night. And little wonder, since the air thereabouts is so invigorating that even a Hog feels a curious giddiness come over him when he sniffs it, and almost finds his toes.

SWALE. Even so, since one of the objects of our Pilgrimage is to establish the Rights of Man Two-Leggèd on the Open Road (as distinct from the footpath), let us go forward four abreast up yonder hill and stand or fall for liberty!

WHARFE. Most certainly we should fall all too soon, but the time is not yet ripe. And you forget, Swale, that our foremost pledge is to pay homage to the peculiar beauty of our Shire, and not until we have fulfilled that condition can we hurl ourselves at the wheel. But I will promise you that before another night passes you shall have your desire.

OUSE. Let us assay the bridge without more ado, and devil take the hindermost.

. . . . .

VI

SCRIBE. And that, I think, is all—alack the day! My hand trembles, my pen falters; and even my ink gives up the ghost!

PATER. Up, man, and tell me what horrible thing has befallen them! Were they all cut down like the wheat in the field; and did they perish without leaving a Farewell Message to the World?

SCRIBE. Calm and comfort yourself; they are still alive and kicking, at least were so when I last clapped eyes on them at Barden Bridge.

PATER. What witchery is here? for that is a good ten miles away. Have they surrendered to the Hog and suffered the degradation of the Wheel? Are they, too, petrol-tainted and on the high road to being damned?

SCRIBE. It is true, furious Pater, that there is a swift service of Hogs from Grassington to Skipton and one has

only to approach cap in hand, limping in token of surrender, to be immediately hurled thither and no questions asked; but these Lads were not to be led so easily by the nose. Far from it, they pushed forward with such strides that they were over the stile and safe by the river-bank again before the devil had so much as doffed his cap to them, let alone wound his horrid horn. Nevertheless, there is a limit to what a simple Squire can unfold and my modest pen is suddenly dumbfounded; for crowded in those ten miles are more wonders than would fill a hundred fat books and a thousand foreign Art Galleries. Did not the greatest landscape painter of all paint his masterpieces in this very dale, and do not the critics deny that such scenery can possibly exist anywhere save in the paint-box of a genius? How then can I hope to convince you or them, with my poor words, of these glories?

PATER. At least you can make bold to try.

SCRIBE. Pen, ink and paper have their uses, but he is a fool who would attempt to ensnare such beauty in a mesh of words!

Even my Lads (for once) were dumb. Caught up into Paradise they heard the secret words which it is not given to man to understand, the words which the heart apprehends, but the tongue cannot speak—nor the pen set down.

Through the enchanting meadows, therefore, they strode silently. Beauty encompassed them; blinded them; gladdened them; girded them; laughed with them as they went on by the marge of Wharfe's meandering stream, like gods together. Past Linton Falls, past Hebden-on-the-Hill, over the swing-bridge and forward by many a lovely bend to Burnsall——

PATER. Where they stopped for refreshments?

SCRIBE. Where they stopped, indeed, but not for refreshments; for Burnsall, once the quietest and loveliest village in the dale, is now the rallying-place for all the Hogs who cannot squeeze into Grassington.

PATER. Well then——

SCRIBE. Even so, my Lads, enchanted by the beauties about them, made to cross the Road and gain the meadows beyond, as if Burnsall had never been beleaguered by the Horde.

PATER. God have mercy on their souls!

SCRIBE. Ouse, it was, who first scented the danger as Wharfe stepped blithely over the green and made for the Road. And not a moment too soon. For it seemed as if all the Hogs in Craven had assembled at that tiny place to bar their way. A wild rout of them raced down from Hartlington; a furious horde bore onward from Barden; a flying column came pell-mell from Grassington. The bridge was barred by a Brigade. The air writhed with the honk of the Horn. The gleaming armour of the richer Hogs flashed in the sun like scimitars. Engines whirred and wailed like howling demons in extreme pain; noxious pipes threw out clouds of stinking fumes, so that even the Hogs themselves gasped and wheezed with dismay.

The noisiest of all was a flying column of Light Hoggets, whose main duty was, apparently, to rush madly up hill and down again, letting off as much smoke and stink as possible, and making a hellish, nerve-racking, ear-splitting, soul-shattering din with their pipes and horns. Beret-Majors, they were called, I believe, and they were especially remarkable for their fantastic goggles and a helmet that was half Tam o' Shanter and half Tambourine. All were bespattered with grime and oil, and seemed richly pleased with themselves; and every now and then they stopped—but only in order that they might start again immediately after with redoubled fury and smoke, and stink and din. And in this they were all too successful. . . .

PATER. And my Lads?

SCRIBE. Found their tongues again, as you shall hear. . .

VII

OUSE. Hell's kettles!

AIRE. Boiling over——

SWALE. . . . Are cool to such a corner as this!

WHARFE. And all the fiends let loose against us Four!

OUSE. But we shall certainly prevail!

SWALE. Let us make the appeal to Reason.

AIRE. Certainly, Swale, if your lungs are equal to it, and your legs are suddenly become like unto those of the Fourth Beast, do you walk among them and tread them down.

WHARFE. Not so fast, nor so foolish, lest we be annihilated. Let us match frenzy with coolness, and paralyse them all by standing stock-still!

OUSE. I think, Wharfe, I will climb the buttress of yonder bridge, and challenge the Champion of the Hogs to single combat; and when he comes roaring past I will hurl myself at his throat and throttle him at the wheel. I will only stipulate that, having done this, the whole rout of them will stop their engines for four seconds while we cross the Road and charge for the stile. And let them follow at their peril!

WHARFE. Admirable Ouse! But how can we stand and see your fat body mangled? For, depend on it, once they had you in their midst, there would be no quarter. The pick of the horde is on our heels, rampant to gain the prize.

AIRE. Let us compromise——

OUSE. And as a sign of our good faith, let us first of all chuck Aire beneath the Wheel!

AIRE. Nothing, Ouse, would so mollify the Hogs as a huge mountain of Flesh like yourself, and if we must offer a propitiatory sacrifice, you will certainly be the first to go. But I was not meaning that. I had in mind a more subtle kind of compromise.

OUSE. Out with it, before I pitch you to them and silence their horrid horns!

AIRE. Over in my great cities, where the Hog is still subject to a show of Authority, there is nothing he fears so much as the Menace of the White Hand.

SWALE. I can well believe you, Aire, but since no white hands remain there the menace must be entirely imaginary.

AIRE. Where the Hog is most rampant, at the busiest corners of my cities, let me tell you, Swale, the white hand is still to be seen—whatever you may think. And not only the hand, but legs also, and arms and likewise a body—decently draped in blue—standing on a little island of its own about three feet square, and raised somewhat above the common plane. Now this island and body are alike inviolable; and the White Hand that it wields is not lightly to be flouted even by the most powerful Hogs that approach. Sometimes they are surging all round it like an angry sea, but with one little flick of the hand, they must divide like Jordan, while I stride defiantly before their throbbing throats.

OUSE. But for my part I would dodge between and defy their disgusting horns.

AIRE. Why, then, you will be the better prepared to carry out my plan.

WHARFE. Let us first hear it unfolded.

AIRE. It is simplicity itself. All that is required is a fat body—such as Ouse undoubtedly possesses—a decent robe of blue and a gloved white hand. Somewhere surely in this neighbourhood these other appurtenances are to be found, and I would suggest that Wharfe sneaks off alone and procures them—at whatever cost. Once they are found, I would have Ouse invest himself in this regalia in some secret cave, prior to taking up his stand in the middle of the bridge. I myself will undertake to instruct him in the mystic movements of the Hand before he goes.

The end is as simple as the beginning.

Ouse advances magisterially to the bridge-head with his back to the village; plants his heels firmly on the ground,

puts on his most officious looks, holds up one fat hand high above his head, and straightway the downward mob will stop as if struck dead with fright. And who am I to blame them?

Whereupon, Ouse brings his other fat hand into play, and signals the rear-guard forward like a King in Babylon dispensing great favours. And immediately they will glide cautiously past him, bowing obsequiously in thanksgiving. But Ouse will only wait patiently until they are all out of sight; then heaving up his other hand and cutting the air furiously with another.

Ouse. God, in His wisdom, Aire, only gave me two hands.

Aire. More than sufficient to clear the Road utterly for our purposes; for when you have paralysed the remaining Hogs with this simple display of prestidigitation, you will calmly signal the downward mob forward in like manner, only taking care to stand your ground manfully until all the approaches are clear, whereupon we shall march resolutely across the bridge and so free you from your peril.

Ouse. There, Aire, you are mistaken; for were I ever to come out of that lions' den alive I should certainly string you up there myself and leave you to perish alone. And even were I ever to soil my hands with such gloves, how could I curb my fury as I stood amongst the howling mob? Not content with flying at the throat of the first, I should kick his wheels to kingdom come; set fire to his engine forthwith; and hurl him over the bridge before he could manœuvre into position.

Wharfe. Happily, Ouse, our plight is not so parlous that we need seek refuge in such tricks; for though all is said to be fair in war, I cannot be a party to such a stratagem in the heart of my own dale. On the contrary, I would have you all plunge with me into my guardian river, and swim safely and serenely beneath that noble bridge to the security of the farther pastures. For in so doing we not only frustrate

and infuriate the combined forces of the Hogs, but we also remain true to our vows, since I cannot remember any clause in them which forbids us to accept the hospitality of our rivers if the Road is barred.

Ouse. I, for one, will be proud to follow; but let us first divest ourselves of bags and baggage and swim stark naked beneath their astonished eyes, so that they will see once before they die, not only the white hand, but also the unblemished and untrammelled white body of Man from whom they are so far descended.

Swale. In the hidden fastnesses of my dale there is nothing I like better than to breast my river in such a fashion; but before the hideous eyes of the Hog—modesty forbids it.

Aire. For my part I will remove my shoes and stockings; dangle my toes before them; tuck up my pants, and ford this stripling stream.

Wharfe. Certainly you would drown; but we have no time to lose over such a monstrous corpse. In with you all before they attempt to pollute this pure water with their poisonous oils and dam it with their hugest engines.

. . . . .

VIII

Scribe. You must remember, my palpitating Pater, that the river was in spate——

Pater. I have never been told.

Scribe. Torrential rains had fallen, none the less, and Wharfe, whirling and foaming, lashed the bridge when they plunged in one after the other.

Pater. And showed, I trust, a clean pair of heels?

Scribe. Booted and clothed, they took to the water, and were swallowed up in the brown flood. Whereat the nearer Hogs set up a wild shout of delight to think they were rid of them so easily at last. And immediately the outlying Hogs

caught it up and yelled for exceeding joy; so that the whole dale from Kettlewell to Burnsall and from Burnsall to Barden was rent with this reverberating scream; but long before the first howl had died away, my Lads were under the bridge and bludgeoning their way through the flood for the meadows beyond.

PATER. And came through alive?

SCRIBE. A little blown belike, and thoroughly drenched to the bone, they clambered out and shook themselves on the bank like the dogs they were.

PATER. Whereupon, I take it, the Hogs perceived and pursued them with an intenser fury?

SCRIBE. You forget, my dear Pater, that the way of the Hog is still limited. He cannot as yet bore his way through a stile nor mount a bridge. All he could do, however, he did. In short, he cursed, fumed, howled, back-fired, and kicked up such an infernal hullabaloo that all the women of Burnsall came running out in their aprons waving their white fists wildly about them and crying: Fire! Murder! Stop Thief! Run! For you must know that Monday is a baking day in those parts; that is, a sort of holy-day. Even so, you cannot imagine the fury of those honest lasses when they found their sensitive bread ruined by this unholy din. Some of them ran along with sad-looking loaves in their hands; others with forlorn fatty-cakes; several had red-hot baking-tins in their aprons; others waved rolling-pins in the air, and some few, flat-irons. All of which with one accord they hurled at the Hogs and then advanced upon them in a body—waving their menacing white arms like Arms of the Law.

Blinded by such a show of spotless hands and daunted by such a vision of clenched fists, the Hogs opened their throttles, threw out a smoke-screen to hide their numbers, and bolted—some forward, some backward, some this way, some that; so that, in a few moments, there was not a Hog to be seen, but only a trail of oil and shattered glass and a

cluster of infuriated women testifying to the battle that had been so well won. And immediately after sweet tranquillity returned again to that green dale.

PATER. Why, then, much as I admire those spirited lasses, I do not like to think of those swaggering Lads hiding behind their apron-strings.

SCRIBE. Those Lads, let me assure you, laughed their sides sore to see how the Hogs had been deceived; but far from hiding, they stepped out the more blithely for Aptwick, singing the praises of their women-folk all the way. And so fiercely did they march, that their clothes dried on them long before they reached it.

But as to how amazed they were with the unfolding beauty of the dale you shall presently hear. . . .

. . . . . .

## IX

WHARFE. Yet, my Lads, though it rejoices my heart to hear such praise, I would have you go over those miles again and again and again: not only by the river-side, but also by the sister Roads, above either bank, for only then can you justly admire its charms.

AIRE. Let us, without further nonsense of any kind, push forward to that bridge which commands the Skipton Road.

WHARFE. What! And miss Appletreewick and its peculiar glories?

OUSE. There are glories and glories; glories sacred and glories profane; glories historic and prehistoric; glories architectural and glories conjectural; glories unique, incomparable, inimitable and unparalleled; glories of ruin and desolation; but for none of these glories do I care to step aside and climb that stiff hill to see Appletreewick. But glories of beef and ale, why they are another matter——

WHARFE. As for that, mangy Ouse, let me tell you that

this Appletreewick of mine is certainly a well-barrelled, richly victualled little place, which would rather perish off the face of the earth than see a man thirst and pine.

When I went into Appletreewick
The sun was scorching hot:
When I went into Appletreewick,
Into the Inn I shot.
Into the Inn at Appletreewick
I went for a foaming pot.

A pot of Aptwick ale, if you please,
A loaf of bread and a chunk of cheese!
And down I sat and took my ease
Until I cleared the lot!
And down I sat and took my ease
Until I cleared the lot.

SWALE. A most immoral song, Wharfe, though you sing like a true taproom tenor.

WHARFE. The last two verses are cram-full of morals:

Good folk who go to Appletreewick
When the sun is scorching hot,
Into the Inn at Appletreewick:
Into the Inn get you double-quick
And call for a foaming pot.

A pot of Aptwick ale, if you please,
A loaf of bread and a chunk of cheese:
And sit ye down and take your ease
Until you clear the lot!
And sit ye down and take your ease
Until you clear the lot!

SWALE. Tell us soberly and simply why you are so urgent for us to visit the place.

WHARFE. Not for this, Swale, nor for that. Not because it boasts a pair of stocks in which malefactors used to be clapped; though I would walk ten thousand miles to see a Hog cooling his heels in such another. Indeed, when we

regain the mastery of the Road, our first business will be to restore the stocks to their former uses, and see to it that never a Hog escapes their embraces.

But not for this would I have you see Appletreewick. Nor even to cast eyes on the old Monk's Hall, where Mass was surely said hundreds of years ago; even though a very gracious lady guards it who would lavish hospitality on you and thoroughly bewitch you with her fine tales.

Nor, again, because of the High Hall with its wych-elm and oaken gallery, where the minstrels used to play; nor the Low Hall neither. Nor for the fame of the old Fair—nor of the Feud.

AIRE. What Feud?

WHARFE. Why, the feud between Sir John York, Lord Mayor of London, and your very Lord of Skipton himself, over the right of free warren and chase in the manor of this same Aptwick, which ended in a free fight.

AIRE. And a new Lord Mayor of London?

WHARFE. Certainly, Aire; Sir John was mulcted in a thundering big fine, but not before his servants had thoroughly thrashed your Skipton lads, as history telleth.

AIRE. The lying jade!

OUSE. And his name was York!

WHARFE. Which brings us, by natural logic, to the reason why I would have you climb the hill and breathe the pure air of that noble hamlet.

OUSE. Out with it before I club you.

WHARFE. It is partly because that thrice-blessed place has the inestimable advantage of being no less than

218¾ Miles from London.

True, I have only the gauge of a Hog for it, but where mere numbers are concerned, I am bound to admit that even a Hog may be right, seeing that he is brought up from birth with a speedometer for a rattle. And somehow when I look on that yellow sign of his, and realise how far away

I am from all corruption, my heart is filled with an incredible joy, and dances with a new delight.

That is one reason why I would have you march with me up that straggling street——

SWALE. All the more reason then why we should turn sharply North again and purge ourselves once more in my own unsullied river.

WHARFE. But the real reason is that this jolly little Aptwick of mine leads directly to Skyreholme and Troller's Ghyll, which is, without doubt, one of the chief wonders of the world.

OUSE. What, again?

WHARFE. I am not aware that I have mentioned it before, or that we have already walked through that fearful ravine: the abode of Spectre-hounds, Barguests and Boggarts. I am not aware that we have passed Percivall Hall (where Nevison used to hide), and splashed our way up the channel of the foaming ghyll, under the shadow of those awful cliffs. I cannot at the moment recall having seen you all grow spectre-thin, as you crawled through that ghostly defile and evaded the clutching arms of the fantastic trees. I do not even remember passing Skyreholme Dam, nor climbing the bluff side of Black Hill to the Grouse Inn. But if we have done all this, and if we have come through it all unscathed, why then let us thank God for a safe-conduct and proceed.

AIRE. I was hoping for that word——

WHARFE. For it is suddenly borne in upon me that my dale hereabouts is so besprent with glories that not in a month of Sundays could we examine them all. It is given to each one of us to explore inch by inch and stile by stile his own particular dale and Riding, but as a Fellowship, you must follow the serene windings of my river, and take my word for the rest. Nevertheless, it saddens me to walk hotfoot through my dale and pass so many marvels by, for

all about us lie surprises and enchantments that beckon me aside. Look at the fine thrust of yonder fells to Simon's Seat, which guards Pockstone Moor and the Great Stray! Sometimes I think that this wild stretch of moor straddling over to Nidderdale is the loveliest of them all. A thousand little rills streak its gold, and the curlews fill the high places with music and mysteries. Grim history lies concealed in every darkling glen: astonishing castles are scattered about its folds, and hardly a rood of it but has its own peculiar name and story.

Sometimes when I tramp it alone I go over them like a blessed litany, and my head swarms with our legends.

Sweet Earth, Padside, Katty White's Allotment, Simon's Seat, Rocking Stone, Hanging Wood, Pippin Castle, Brass Castle, John o' Gaunt's Castle, Catholic Gate, Timble, Blubberhouses, and that remote, that scattered and elusive, that austere, that half-deserted village of West End. And, of course—Swinsty Hall——

AIRE. Under correction, I believe that Swinsty belongs to the Leeds Corp——

WHARFE. A plague on all Corps——and a plague on Leeds for ruining my lovely Washburn with its pestilential waterworks.

It makes me foam at the mouth to see these remote Corporations—a murrain on that word!—damming my little ghylls and blasting my little valleys—and altering the whole face of Nature—for the sake of their progressive factories.

SWALE. I hope, Wharfe, we are not yet within sight or smell of these abominable places: for I would rather face the Horde again than have my lungs polluted by foul smoke.

WHARFE. Rest assured, Swale, we are exactly at Barden Bridge, which is, I suppose, as pure and undefiled as any bridge in Christendom, and twice as beautiful. Moreover, we are about to walk through Bolton Wood, where my river will at once terrify and amaze you with its furious revelry.

AIRE. I will only say——

WHARFE. On second thoughts I rather think you will wait until you have seen it with your eyes.

OUSE. In the name of liberty!

WHARFE. The moment you have passed the Priory I will hear you out; but I refuse to argue until I have first mesmerised you with my intervening marvels. First, I will have you gaze on Barden Tower itself, which guards the right of way. For it was from this gate that Clifford led our lads to Flodden Field, and on yonder Steep he stood night after night, watching the stars wheeling down the sky! And if you had climbed the dark Tower at midnight when the owls were hooting you would have felt the clasp of his still warm hand, and known him for a friend.

AIRE. Nicholson has sung of him, and that is enough for me!

. . . . .

X

SCRIBE. And, forthwith, Aire proceeded to stun them with his own peculiar poet, but I, alas, must needs devote this little breathing-space to a poet—if one can call him by that noble name — though he falls rather under the category of poetasters—a word which always reminds me of ale-tasters. . . .

PATER. That is to do a violence to an honourable profession.

SCRIBE. Why, then, we will call him by his proper name, which is a Hog, though a peculiar kind of Hog, as you shall shortly see.

PATER. Are not all Hogs peculiar?

SCRIBE. Even so, this Hog was exceptional, since he aspired to write original verse, and in so doing perpetrated what is, I hope, the worst poem in the world.

PATER. I hope you will spare me that.

SCRIBE. When I tell you that the subject of this execrable

song was none other than our beloved Bolton Woods themselves——

PATER. What outrage is this!

SCRIBE. You do well to call it an outrage, and, indeed, even at this late day, I can scarcely recall it without breaking out in a cold perspiration and stamping my feet with rage.

PATER. I hope it was not printed.

SCRIBE. Happily it was borne away on the wind.

PATER. On my oath, then, I would rather mercifully shroud it in oblivion.

SCRIBE. If only to get the load of it off my mind, I must repeat it, lest it disturb me in my grave and make me walk the night every Hallow E'en reciting it as an everlasting punishment. But, in the first place, you may very well ask how came this Hog to break out into verse at all—even execrable verse such as this.

PATER. I will do no such thing.

SCRIBE. Then I will make bold to tell you, lest you jump to a false conclusion. For you will certainly suppose that he caught a flying glimpse of those green woods as he rushed past them on the Burnsall road; and, forthwith, perpetrated these egregious lines. But you will be wrong. For the amazing truth is that this extraordinary Hog actually stumbled into the very woods themselves.

PATER. That I shall certainly not believe, knowing the Keepers as I do.

SCRIBE. Certainly, there is a limit to the carriage-drive, and a barrier forbidding any wheeled thing to go forward. Nevertheless, this, at least, to his credit: he went forward.

PATER. In his dreadful machine?

SCRIBE. No Hog has ever dared to do that! Indeed, none has tried. The majority of them take a frenzied peep at the Abbey through the Hole-in-the-wall, and then rush forward at fifty miles an hour to Grassington.

But this Hog was made of different mettle. Carefully

parking his Machine he tottered forward with one hand grasping the rail and the other brandishing his licence, until by a super-hoggish effort he came within sight of those unimaginable trees. Whereupon he jumped sky-high. And immediately the dust fell in great clouds from his eyes, ears and mouth; and touched by the incredible beauty of that place, speech returned again!

PATER. No.

SCRIBE. Yes.

PATER. Not human speech.

SCRIBE. Human speech as distinct from Hog-jargon.

PATER. Certainly a miracle of the first water.

SCRIBE. Say rather a miracle of the meeting of the water; for he had crawled forward, under the reviving influence of his petrol flask, to that astonishing point where the river divides and re-mingles——

PATER. And then——

SCRIBE. His hoggishness fell from him as if it had been sloughed; recollections of his early childhood surged up within him, and he was seized with the most dreadful convulsions.

PATER. Whereupon he took another pull at his flask and composed his ribald song?

SCRIBE. On the contrary, something urged him to hurl the flask into the hedge and crawl on his hands and knees towards the brink of the pure stream. How long he remained grovelling there and gulping mouthfuls of that nectar I have no patience to tell; but certainly too long by half. All that matters is that he suddenly arose and began babbling his rotten verse like a prize sonneteer, stammering a little at every verse-end.

And this was the burthen of it:

O Bolton Woods are green—are green,
  And Bolton Woods are green:
And Bolton Woods are the greenest woods
  That ever I have seen!

Thoroughly pleased with his handiwork, he looked round him again, and thumped his fat head in search of some still more odious rhymes. And after a silence of half an hour he burst forth once more in the same miserable manner:

O Bolton Woods are old—are old,
And Bolton Woods are old:
And Bolton Woods are the oldest woods
Of all—so I am told.

This, as you might expect, stunned him, but not, alas, for ever. Having achieved this masterpiece of the inane, nothing would serve him but to elaborate it. And his third effort was, I think, if anything, worse than the first two. It went:

O Bolton Woods are grand—are grand,
And Bolton Woods are grand:
And Bolton Woods are the grandest woods,
I'm given to understand.

PATER. That certainly was the high-water word of hoggishness, as I hope even he realised?

SCRIBE. Not at all! Buoyed up by his sudden volubility, he began to preen himself and to imagine vain things.

He began to think that the Woods belonged to him and lost no time in broadcasting his discovery like a Sussex chanticleer:

O Bolton Woods are mine—are mine,
O Bolton Woods are mine:
And Bolton Woods are my very own Woods:
Oak, ash, and elm and pine.

And with that, one of my silent woodmen—who prowl the woods on purpose to prevent anyone doing a violence to any tree or trees, either by carving his monstrous name on them, or—worst of all—bemauling them by means of miserable verse—up and clubbed him on the spot; then hurled

him into a bottomless pothole high up on Barden Fell, where the merlin howls.

Pater. How much more charitable it had been to bury his verses with him as is the custom in foreign parts!

Scribe. You must remember that these verses were not committed to paper, but rather bawled out at the top of the voice for all the Woods to hear, so that the more timid trees shuddered at the outrage, while all the kingfishers, ouzels, throstles, larks, finches, tawny owls, long-tailed tits, blue-tits, dippers and merlins stampeded in a wild panic and were with difficulty persuaded to return.

Pater. And the Lads?

Scribe. Let us, by all means, pursue them before it is too late.

Pater. What trickery is this?

Scribe. Saving your grace, nothing but hard heel and toe; for while we have been gallivanting together, they have stolen a march on us: and are even now tilluping blithely through those Woods themselves. Indeed, judging by the thunder of the water I should say they are within a stride of Big Strid itself. Pay heed, my Pater, to every word they have to say, for I doubt if they are long for this world!

## XI

Wharfe. You may well stand back and catch your breath, my Lads, at such a churning as this! Look well to your foothold, lest you be lost to sight, to memory dear; for though many fall in, few come out of this frothy maelstrom alive. Yet is it not as if all the milk-pails in the dales had suddenly tippled over and shot their lovely stuff through the defile?

Ouse. It is as if ten thousand barrels of the nappiest brown ale had suddenly sprung a leak——

Aire. And what was a broad river is shrunk into a bottle-neck too narrow to hold such brimming stuff down!

SWALE. At Kisdon I could show you lovelier falls: and Yore, too, is full of them; but never have I seen such a boiling cauldron of suds as this before!

OUSE. Let us jump it to prove our legs!

WHARFE. At your peril, Ouse! Down there below at Little Strid there is a jump that my lads have often enough essayed since Egremond fell; and not always without a ducking and a drowning: for all the power and fury of my river are at full play. And though it is narrow enough hereabouts, it is as deep and proud as an angry sea, and woe betide any man who pits his strength against it! Sometimes it seems to me that my brown Wharfe resents being treated as a common hop-skip-and-jump, and shows its resentment by clutching an unlucky lad in its fierce arms and dragging him down to his doom.

OUSE. Why, then, tell me how many Hogs an hour you think it might swallow up in that way, if we were to stand here shoving them in with all our might and main?

WHARFE. That would all depend on how many gallons of oil each Hog exuded, and how many Hogs we could decoy.

SWALE. For myself, Wharfe, as I stand here in the heart of your demesnes, I am puzzled and a little pained to find my progress barred by a cunning fence; and as my eye follows the fence to its natural conclusion, it discerns a kind of sentry-box above out of which a man peers inquisitively.

WHARFE (*covered with confusion*). That must be the Keeper of the Archives!

OUSE. The what?

WHARFE. Why, you should know, Ouse, these woods of mine are so justly celebrated that people flock from all corners of the world to see and admire them. It behoves us, therefore, to put our watchful Keepers in odd nooks and corners to see that no covetous off-coom'd'uns slip through and run away with an old oak; and, above all, that no Hog seeks to make away with his oily self at the Strid.

AIRE. The disgusting truth is, honest Swale, that this Keeper of his stands guard not to punch heads, but rather to punch tickets.

WHARFE. It is true, Swale, that jealous Lads, such as Aire, cannot walk these woods without a passport; but I will enfeoff you for all time to come.

Meanwhile I would have you listen diligently to my words, for the hour approaches when our ways divide.

OUSE. What madness is this?

AIRE. Or what joy?

SWALE. What Hogs or what Chimneys?

WHARFE. In a word, it is all and none; as I will explain. For in a little while we shall reach that venerable Priory of mine, which I have had in mind ever since we first set foot in Craven, though before we reach it we must first ford my river for the last time. For Wharfe, hereabouts, curls round and round in an ecstasy of joyful anticipation, as you shall shortly see.

Now, when we have trodden that holy ground and roused the ghosts of the old Monks with the thunder of our orisons, we shall step out briskly through the farther woods until we reach the little gate at Bolton Bridge.

OUSE. Where, I trust, we shall find a jolly, richly-victualled, vatted, well-wooded, deeply-laden, low-raftered, warmly-bedded Pub where we may drink, eat, sing and sleep before setting out again together in the early morning on our great quest.

WHARFE. How I should love to lead you all through our old kingdom of Elmet; through the Ainsty to the very bank of Ouse, and so to the sea. But it may not be.

OUSE. By St. George! but I should like to ask you why?

WHARFE. Because we are on the borderland of perils unbelievable, and we are a marked band.

OUSE. All the more reason to march defiantly on together.

WHARFE. Certainly, Ouse, that would be a fine death;

but what of the Cause we espoused at our first Wapentake? Did we not plant our heels firmly in the ground and swear an oath to free the Road from the tyranny of the usurper; and shall we do this by being hacked up at Bolton Bridge?

SWALE. Tell us, then, plainly, what is your plan?

AIRE. To turn somersaults or tails?

OUSE. Or wave a white flag and wallow in oils as a token of submission?

WHARFE. By my boots and staff! I have a mind to lead you up that Valley of Desolation opposite, and leave you to work out your salvation alone, did I not know that in all probability you would stumble on that great farm of mine called Broadshaw, and live there on the fat of the land till you were too disgustingly obese to move. Listen while I explain!

. . . . .

OUSE. By'r Lakin, I would rather feed my eyes on yonder melancholy ruin ahead.

WHARFE. Why, that is my blessed Bolton at last, where half my heart is already buried; and where that little Crusader of mine stands guard with a cross fleury on his breast, facing the world alone. Let him be your exemplar, for my purpose is for each one of us henceforward to take his stand on the Road alone, and rouse the flower of the three Ridings to his side.

OUSE. Let us rather remain together like those stout little knights of mine who stand up defiantly on the turrets of Micklegate Bar . . . facing all-comers——

WHARFE. You forget, Ouse, that we are not made of stone; and experience tells me that whereas four of us abreast will surely fall against a million mercenaries, four single-minded solitaries may journey to the four corners of the earth and win. . . . Already the wind that roars round the high places of the Pennines is shouting our message

from hill to hill, and to-morrow the valleys will resound with our story. And something tells me that Ouse, striding valiantly forward, will yet reach York, and so to the sea, with thousands upon thousands at his heels.

Ouse. An I reach York I shall pass through Micklegate Bar and drink a pint without at the Windmill, and a pint within at the Barefoot Inn, to the Fellowship, and the Cause!—And then to Mass and my Easter duties.

Wharfe. And something tells me that Swale, by swift and sure steps, will yet regain his secret and serene abode with all the North at his side.

Swale. On Nine Standards Rigg I will unfurl our banner and assemble them all for the assault!

Wharfe. And something assures me that Aire, having secured Skipton and summoned Craven to his aid, will yet attain his Cove.

Aire. God knows I shall never want to leave it again, but at the appointed hour I will be ready with my Craven Champions—and woe betide the Horde!

Wharfe. And something tells me that having first heard Mass at Myddleton, I will fight my way to Tadcaster, and on to the field called Forty Acres by Cawood, where my river ends; and then by Pomfret and Sandal to Kirkleas and the southernmost purlieus of the Shire. And everywhere the beacons will blaze with our fires and the thud of marching Lads will reverberate on the Roads again. And the wail of the last Hog will ascend miserably on the night air, while the curlews peck holes in his tyres.

Ouse. I have a mind, Wharfe, to seek out a quiet corner of this Old Priory and pray for a livelier Faith.

Wharfe. Let us pray together for the last time!

. . . . .

XII

SCRIBE. *Jube, Pater, benedicere!*

PATER. Get you back to the Priory and pray with these Lads in their extremity.

SCRIBE. Though I prayed there till my knees cracked and my back and my beads broke, I would pray for them in vain.

PATER. Surely the Hogs are not so abandoned as to break the laws of Sanctuary and hurl them from their first true frithstool?

SCRIBE. You forget only three things; but they are all weighty things.

PATER. Namely——

SCRIBE. The volume of water that flows under the bridges between sundown and sunup; the amount of ale malted in a like period; and the ravenous hunger that assails all who betake themselves to the Road.

PATER. After them forthwith!

SCRIBE. I hope you will not pursue them too closely lest you put your foot in it.

PATER. Not for worlds would I make their path more perilous by setting those howling whippets on their heels. Nevertheless, there is a nice proportion in all things; and, having shepherded these wilful sheep as patiently as any Swardill lad from Barney Castle to Bolton Priory, I am not going to see them suddenly raped from me without raising a mighty hullabaloo. It is but a minute ago since I left them cropping those blessed pastures, and lapping up the pure water of Wharfe; and here they are scattered to the four corners of the Shire—at least I will know whether they repented their evil ways and took the pledge before setting out on their solitary quests.

SCRIBE. Not so fast nor so furious, lest you do them a great wrong, for you must know better than I that these sudden conversions are thoroughly bad for the soul and

last no longer than a bad headache. But since you are, in an especial sense, their spiritual father, I will make bold to put you on their track for a moment longer.

And the long and short of it is that they dogged Wharfe's heels meekly through those lovely pastures as far as Bolton Bridge; climbed up the last steps and so reached the Road again. But no sooner had Wharfe pointed out their various ways than Ouse and Aire and Swale broke out into open rebellion, and refused point-blank to proceed a foot farther until they had eaten and supped together for the last time. And, indeed, had not Wharfe at once promised to lead them to a fat farm of his——

PATER. Where?

SCRIBE. It is neither here nor there.

PATER. But I insist——

SCRIBE. But not half so fiercely as those famished Lads, who would certainly have pitched Wharfe over that noble bridge into his own icy waters had he not complied. But whether he took them to Hospital Farm, or Ling Chapel, or Gibbeter or Howber Hill, or Ham Pike, or Ham Gill, or Catgill, or Low Field, or Ling Park, or West Hall, or New Hall, I, for one, will not blab. Suffice that it has stood squat under the Beacon time out of mind; and had both cellars and ceilings full of masterpieces——

PATER. Why, what uncouth custom is this?

SCRIBE. The acme of refinement; for those in the cellars were water-colours in barrels, and those on the ceiling were flitches in oils; and I would that all masterpieces were as soothing to the eye and as satisfying to the hungry heart of man, masterpieces which you might say in all honesty filled a long-felt want. In short, so thoroughly did those thirsty Lads soak themselves in Art that it was more than Wharfe could do to drag them away from the table on which, for their nicer appreciation, the masterpieces were temporarily laid.

PATER. To speak plainly, they drank till they were drunk.

SCRIBE. I must have time to think out such a conundrum; meanwhile, let me describe how Wharfe and Aire, sinking all differences that might hitherto have existed between them, and standing with their backs to the Beacon and their faces towards the most famous ridge of moors in the world, began singing in unison and with the most spirited tempo and gusto imaginable that age-long song of theirs, whose origin is shrouded in mystery.

PATER. I confess I cannot recall such a song.

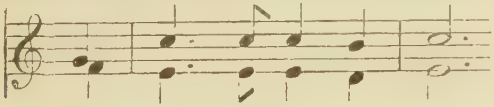
SCRIBE. I am amazed to hear you say so, and still more amazed that the echo of their lusty voices did not startle the still air of Timbuctoo. . . . For I think no two men have ever stood up on their legs and bawled so loudly and lustily since songs were first sung. And when I go on to say that Ouse and Swale caught up the chorus and hurled it round and round the rafters, you will, perhaps, share my astonishment.

PATER. What is the burthen of this ribald song?

SCRIBE. Say, rather, of this national anthem; for it has about it the challenge of a charge—and the pathos of a prayer.

I need but to mention it to set your pulses drumming, for it is called:

ON ILKLA MOOR BAHT 'AT.

And they sang it stanza by stanza, like this (more or less [1]):

WHARFE.

Wheer wer' ta bahn w'en Ah saw thee?
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.
Wheer wer' ta bahn w'en Ah saw thee?
Wheer wer' ta bahn w'en Ah saw thee?

[1] Fourteen impromptus suppressed.—[ED.]

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

AIRE.

Aw wor a-coortin' Mary Jane,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Aw wor a-coortin' Mary Jane,
Aw wor a-coortin' Mary Jane.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

WHARFE.

Aw'll tell thi father w'en he comes whoam,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Aw'll tell thi father w'en he comes whoam,
Aw'll tell thi father w'en he comes whoam.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

WHARFE.

Tha'll sewerly ketch thi deeath o' cowd,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Tha'll sewerly ketch thi deeath o' cowd,
Tha'll sewerly ketch thi deeath o' cowd.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

AIRE.

Aw'm sewer it wor as warrm as toast,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Aw'm sewer it wor as warrm as toast,
Aw'm sewer it wor as warrm as toast.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

WHARFE.

Tha'll get a bonny month i' bed,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Tha'll get a bonny month i' bed,
Tha'll get a bonny month i' bed.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at

AIRE.

Then yo can coom an' berry me,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Then yo can coom an' berry me,
Then yo can coom an' berry me.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

WHARFE.

The wurrms'll coom an' ate thee oop,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
The wurrms'll coom an' ate thee oop,
The wurrms'll coom an' ate thee oop.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

AIRE.

Ahr ducks'll gobble oop the wurrms,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Ahr ducks'll gobble oop the wurrms,
Ahr ducks'll gobble oop the wurrms.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

AIRE.

An' yo can gobble oop the ducks,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
An' yo can gobble oop the ducks,
An' yo can gobble oop the ducks.

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

WHARFE.

Then we sall all be atin' thee!
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
Then we sall all be atin' thee!
Then we sall all be atin' thee!

ALL.

On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

. . . . .

XIII

PATER. Much is forgiven them for singing at least one truly logical, moral and rhythmical song, even though the place to sing it was on Rumbold's Moor itself, with their legs moving rhythmically forward.

SCRIBE. So Wharfe would have it too; and they were hard put to it to restrain him from leading them all out again under the stars and marching slap at the ridge and so upsetting all his plans. But, fortunately, Ouse, backed up by Swale, prevailed; and, in short—but not before they had broached a new barrel—they were bedded down for the last time and slept the sleep of the just.

PATER. And awoke, I take it, at noon next day—at loggerheads.

SCRIBE. Dawn had barely dappled the sky when Wharfe roused them with a hearty kick on the buttocks and bid them boot. And in less time than it takes to tell, they were booted——

PATER. Out of that farm, I take it?

SCRIBE. Out of that valiant farm to the banks of that swift river, in which they plunged, one after the other, for

the last time. And then, thoroughly roused, soused and refreshed, they clothed themselves while the mist still veiled the hills, and stepped forth bravely along the appointed ways to fulfil their several destinies——

PATER. Hold! I will not have them swallowed up in a mist like this——

SCRIBE. I protest I speak no more than the sober truth, and (in any case) do but follow the best traditions of the Heroic Age. Out of a mist, like Immortals, they set out from Barney Castle; into a mist, in like manner, they disappear from mortal ken. Look for them in the dales of Paradise!

PATER. Ah! If there are dales in Paradise!

SCRIBE. What heresy is this—and from you of all men!

*If* there are dales in Paradise
  You ask: and in a trice
Bursts forth a heaven-rending shout,
Pater, there's not the smallest doubt!

. . . . .

There *must* be dales in Paradise,
  Where Wharfe and Aire and Swale
Fulfil their several destinies
  And tell their various tale:
    Flinging themselves just when they choose
    Into the honest arms of Ouse!

There must be dales in Paradise,
  Else what will dalesmen do
Throughout the long eternities,
  And none to wander through!
    Where walk and sing and laugh and laike
    Before the rest of heaven's awake?

There must be dales in Paradise,
  Which you and I will find,
And walk together dalesmen-wise,
  And smile (since God is kind)
    At all the foreign peoples there
    Enchanted by our blessèd air!

There must be dales in Paradise
With noble tops atween:
Swart fells uprearing to the skies
And stretching to the green—
And "ower t' tops" we two shall go,
Knee-deep in ling and broom or snow!

There must be inns in Paradise
Where nappy ale is sold,
And beef and pickles—even pies
Such as we've known of old!
And we will find a parlour there,
And call for pints for all to share!

O we will walk with stalwart tread
Thro' the eternal day,
And waken all the lately-dead
With ditties loud and gay!
Inciting the angelic choirs
To twang the chorus on their lyres!

PATER. But not, I hope, such ribald songs as that! For the moment, come down to earth and tell me plainly and succinctly what befell each of these Lads when the Hogs discovered him alone!

SCRIBE. Ask rather what befell your faithful little Scribe who found himself suddenly wandering by the wayside alone —tossed aside, discarded. For while I was debating whether it were safer to follow in the wake of the sturdy feet of Ouse, or the hot heels of Aire, or the confident steps of Wharfe, or the jolly stride of Swale — in that very moment, my power fell from me; and I was no more than a voice crying out in the wilderness.

This only dare I tell you:

Those Four Lads were scattered to the four corners of the earth . . . Swale to the North; Wharfe to the South; Ouse to the East, and Aire to the West; so that, taking the Priory as their centre-point, they made the Sign of the Cross over the whole Shire with their footprints, and so followed their guiding stars.

And having said that, I can no more.

. . . . .

PATER. Then, how dismally, how woefully, how ignominiously you have failed.

SCRIBE. *Mea maxima culpa!* But, by the same token, I am not the first——

PATER. For neither have you followed those swaggering Four faithfully to the bitter end, nor have you rendered a tithe of the justice due to the Shire.

SCRIBE. So amply conscious am I of this that I had half a mind to draw up a great Apology to the Things Not Praised, and more especially to the Things which Ouse praised at such a gabble, that they went in at one ear and out of the other before my gallant little pen could pin them down. With this end in view, I sat me down at the foot of Cowper's Cross on Rumbold's Moor, and began marshalling my Omissions. God help me! For at sundown I discovered, to my mortification, that it would take no fewer than fifteen quarto volumes to do justice to the Abbeys, Priories, Cathedrals, Churches and Chantries, let alone the Castles and Towers and Great Cities of Aire. . . . But when I came to make a tally of the pubs which my Lads had severally described, and, above all, when I drew up a concise account of the curious curses they had each levelled at the Hogs: cramp seized my fingers, my pencil fell, and my leaves were borne away on the wind in the wake of the Lads themselves!

One thing only buoys me up when I brood on these things.

PATER. Out with it!

SCRIBE. It is that I am able to append to this unassuming little book, as is the custom of all learned writers, a few pithy quotations from Genesis downward, to point the moral of my halting text; as well as a short bibliography of invaluable works, either out of print or in print, which will

help to make up for my shortcomings. But before I do so, I wish to make it plain that I have rigidly excluded the fourteen hundred and eighty-nine erudite chronicles that any man who cares can consult in the great Libraries (after depositing his umbrella) on payment of the usual charge. In short, I have confined my list to esoteric works.

PATER. For the moment I will waive that point, and concentrate on the Hogs, who, it seems, are rampantly triumphant.

SCRIBE. You forget that the Rising is to follow, and that this was no more than the preliminary reconnoitre. Already those Lads (if they have not perished by the Wheel) are mustering their men together for the assault. But until such time as they summon me to their side again to witness the final overthrow of the Horde, I will dispose of the whole pack of the Hogs in four lines.

PATER. I should like to see you try.

SCRIBE. Here then is a little Squib all for themselves:

> Think not, O Hog, that I have striven
> To put a spoke in thy damn'd wheel,
> Think rather I have been sore driven
> To pawse two out and make thee squeal!

PATER. "Pawse" is good, but I cannot permit "damn'd" to stand, if you value my Imprimatur.

SCRIBE. I am sorry to hear that, since the proofs are already in the Press, and you are too late by an edition. But I will promise you that it shall be deleted from the next impression, should it be called for half so quickly as I expect.

PATER. I like your impudence.

SCRIBE. There are worse weeds!

EXPLICIT
OR
T' LAP UP ON'T

*Easter*, 1928.
BURLEY-IN-WHARFEDALE.

# APPENDICES

## THE OLD ROAD

1. Arise and walk through the land in the length and in the breadth thereof, for I will give it to thee. . . .—*Genesis.*

2. And you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands; and you shall eat in haste for it is the Phase.—*Exodus.*

3. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my paths shall be exalted. Behold these shall come from afar and behold these from the North and from the sea; and these from the south-country.—*Isaias.*

4. And Moses swore in that day; the land which thy feet hath trodden upon shall be thy possession and thy children's for ever, because thou hast followed the Lord thy God.—*Josue.*

5. For in thee will I run girded: in my God I will leap over the wall. . . .

6. Asahel was light of his feet as a roe. . . .—*II. Kings.*

7. Making my feet like the feet of the harts and setting me upon my high places. . . .

8. Thou shalt enlarge my steps under me and my ankles shall not fail.—*II. Kings.*

9. Noe was a just and perfect man in his generations; he walked with God.—*Genesis.*

10. Better is the poor man walking in his simplicity than the rich in crooked ways.—*Proverbs.*

11. As a lame man hath fair legs in vain, so a parable is unseemly in the mouth of fools.—*Proverbs.*

12. Be not a friend to an angry man: and do not walk with a furious man.—*Proverbs.*

13. His legs as pillars of marble that are set upon bases of gold. His form as of Libanus excellent as the cedars.—*Canticle of Canticles.*

14. And whosoever will force thee one mile: go with him other two.—*Sermon on Mount.*

15. How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O Prince's daughter! The joints of thy thighs are like jewels that are made by the hand of a skilled workman!—*Canticle of Canticles.*

16. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace.—*Isaias.*

17. Upon the dark mountain, lift ye up a banner. Exalt the Voice, lift up the hand and let the rulers go to the gates.—*Isaias.*

18. Give ye glory to the Lord your God before it be dark and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains. . . .—*Jeremias.*

19. . . . And very old shoes which for a show of age were clouted with patches. . . .—*Josue.*

20. *Everyman.* My *Cousin*: will you not with me go?
*Cousin.* No, by our Lady, I have the cramp i' my toe!
*Everyman.*

21. Go thou to Everyman and show him in my name
A Pilgrimage he must on him take
Which he in no wise may escape. *Everyman.*
*Goods.* Nay, not so, I am too brittle: I may not endure.
I will follow no man on foot, be ye sure.
*Everyman.*

22. If ivver thoo gav awther hosen or shoon,
Ivvery neet an' all:
Clap thee doon and put 'em on
An' Christ tak up thy saul:
But if hosen or shoon, thoo nivver gave neean,
Ivvery neet an' all:
T' whinnies'll prick thee sair to t' bean
An' Christ tak up thy saul.
*Cleveland Lyke-Wake Dirge.*

23. 'Twere a dree neet, a dree neet, ower Whinny Muir to trake
Wi' shoonless feet, ower flinty steanes, thruf mony a thorny Brake. *A Dree Neet.*

24. Through muirs, hills and vallies
He made briggs and causeways.
High street for common passage. . . .
*Of Belinus.*

25 *Boyet.* They say that they have measured many miles
To tread a measure with you on this grass.
*Rosaline.* It is not so. Ask them how many inches
Is in one mile: if they have measured many,
The measure, then, of one is easily told. . . .
*Biron.* Tell her we measure them by weary steps.
*Love's Labour's Lost.*

26. I do not without danger walk these streets.
*Twelfth Night.*

27. And did those Feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green?
*Blake.*

## THE OLD SHIRE

1. One may call and justify this to be the best shire in England
*Fuller (on Yorkshire).*

2. *All t' Lot*

Then shaht till ye've gorr hoast, lads!
Sing Yorkshermen, wer tooast, lads!
Wer king, wer heeath, wer hahnds, lads!
Wer hooam, wer hearth, wer bahns, lads!
*Hunting Song (Richard Blakeborough).*

3. In ivery dale a castle stands—
Sing Clifford, Percy, Scrope!
They threaped amang theirselves for t' lands,
But fowt for t' King or t' Pope.

O Swardill's good for horses, an' Wensladill for cheese,
And Airdill fowk are busy as a bee;
But wheresoe'er I wander
My owd heart aye grows fonder
O' Whardill wheer I'll lig me down an' dee.
*F. W. Moorman.*

4. Mi hooam's Yorksher, it accres brooad
Hod mooast mi kindred booans. . . .
*Robin Hode an' His Merrie Men.*
*(J. Malham-Dembleby.)*

5. Helmets their kettles and a spear their fork
To turn the chop, the steak—or roasting pork.
*Lyre of Ebor.*

6. Now I speak of a Flood who thinks there's none should dare
Once to compare with her suppos'd by her descent
The darling Daughter born of lofty Penyghent
Who from her Father's Foot by Skipton town doth guard.
*Drayton (Of Aire).*

7. Listen, lively lordings all,
Lithe and listen unto mee:
And I will sing of a noble earle,
The noblest earle in the North Countrie. . . .

That baron to his castle fled,
To Barnard Castle then fled hee,
The uttermost walls were eathe to win,
The earles have wonne them presentlie. . . .

But the Dun bull is fled and gone
And the half-moone vanished away,
The Erles, though they were brave and bold,
Against so many could not stay.

Thee, Norton, wi' thine eight good sonnes
They doom'd to dye, alas, for ruth!
Thy reverend lockes thee could not save
Nor them their faire and blooming youth.

Wi' them full many a galannt wight
They cruelly bereav'd of life.
And many a childe made fatherlesse,
And widowed many a tender wife.

*The Rising of the North*
(*Percy's Reliques*).

8. In Craven Wilds is many a den
To shelter persecuted men,
Far under ground is many a cave
Where they might lie as in the grave.

*Wordsworth.*

9. Then, pensive Votary! let thy feet repair
To Gordale-chasm terrific as the lair
Where the young lions couch. *Idem.*

10. From Barden went the noble-hearted Swire,
With horse and harness rode the sons of Carr,
Stout, brave and fierce, as ever went to war,
From Langcliffe rode the fiery-hearted Browns!

*Lyre of Ebor.*

11. On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at,
On Ilkla Moor baht 'at.

12. Our native county: t' biggest, t' bonniest and t' best!

# THE OLD HOG

1. After this, I beheld in the vision of the night, and lo! a fourth beast, terrible, and wonderful and exceeding strong. It had great iron teeth, eating and breaking into pieces and treading down the rest with its feet: and it was unlike to the other beasts which I had seen before, and it had ten horns.—*Daniel.*

2. The eyes of a wise man are in his head; the fool walketh in darkness. And I learned that they were to die both alike.—*Eccles.*

3. The Idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold. . . . They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not. They have ears and hear not; they have noses and smell not. They have hands and feel not; they have feet and *walk* not. Neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them.—*Psalms.*

. . . . . .

4. And did not one of his Ancestors die by the jostle of a Hog?
*Montaigne.*

5. They fledd away by Watling Strete,
They had no succour but their feet,
It was the more pitye.
*Ballad of The Felon Sow.*

6. I have sought with my dogs
All Horberry shrogs,
And of fifteen Hogs
Found I but one.
*Wakefield Mystery Play.*

7. Dear Hog! Thou King of Meat!
So near thy lord mankind!

8. How fit a title clothes their Governors!
Themselves the Hogs as all their subjects boors!
*A. Marvell.*

9. We, the Jurymen, do amerce each person, who shall hereafter suffer their Hogs OR SWINE to go at large within the jurisdiction of this court, the sum of £0 3s. 4d. for such HOG OR SWINE.
*Skipton Court Leet.*

10. . . . Where like HOGS in Mire they threw me. . . .
*Drunken Barnaby.*

11. . . . The horn at the gate of the Barbican tower
Was blown with a loud twenty-trumpeter power
And in rush'd a troop of strange guests! Such a group
As had ne'er before darken'd the door of the Scroope!
This looks like De Saye—yet it is not De Saye—
And this is—no, 'tis not—Sir Reginald Braye—
This has somewhat the favour of Marmaduke Grey—
But stay! *Where on earth did he get those long nails?*
Why they're *claws!*—then Good Gracious—they've all of them *tails.*
That can't be De Vaux—why his nose is a bill,
Or I would say a beak! and he can't keep it still!
Is that Poynings? Oh *Gemini!* look at his feet!!
Why they're absolute hoofs: is it gout or his corns
That has crumpled them up so? By Jingo, he's horns!
Run! Run! There's Fitz-Walter, Fitz-Hugh and Fitz-John,
And the Mendeville, père et fils, etc.
*Ingoldsby Legend of the North Countrie.*

12. THE HOG CHAUFFEUR

He drew on a boot to hide his hoof,
He drew on a glove to hide his claw,
His horns were concealed by a Bras Chapeau.
Shelley, *The Devil's Walk.*

13. Choose Reform or Civil War
When through the Streets instead of hare with dogs
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.
*Swellfoot the Tyrant.*

14. A miserable state is that of Pigs
For if their driver would tear caps and wigs
The Swine must bite each other's ear therefor. . . .
*Idem.*

15. Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
These hares, these wolves, these anything but men
Hey, for a whipper-in! my loyal Pigs,
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles',

Your steps as swift as greyhounds', and your cries
More dulcet and symphonious than the bells
Of village-towers, on sunshine holiday;
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music,
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!
Through forest, furze, and bog, and den, and desert,
Pursue the ugly beasts! Tallyho! ho!

CHORUS OF SWINE

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go! We go!
Tallyho! tallyho!
Through pond, ditch, and slough,
Wind them, and find them,
Like the Devil behind them.
Tallyho! tallyho!

[*Exeunt in full cry: Iona driving on the Swine, with the empty Green Bag*] *Idem.*

16. Dinging and singing
From slumber I rung her
Loud as the clank of an ironmonger,
Hum! Hum! Hum!
Far! Far! Far!
With the trump of my lips and the sting at my hips,
I drove her—afar!
Far! Far! Far!
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star—
Homeless she passed, like a cloud on the blast,
Seeking peace, finding war;
She is here in my car;
From afar and afar,
Hum! Hum!
The venom is working,
I have stung her and rung her.
And if you had hung her
With canting and quirking

She could not be deader than she will be soon,
I have driven her close to you under the moon
Night and Day, hum, ha! ha!
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place till at last I have dumbed her.
Hum! Hum! Hum!

*Swellfoot the Tyrant.*

17. OF THE WALLS OF YORK

. . . Indeed they are often battered down for the materials to be appropriated to the erection of a Hog-stye, or for some equally disgraceful purpose.

*Allen.*

## THE OLDEN ALE

1. . . . Stood up one of the North-Country men,
A Boon Good Fellow, and a lover of Strong Ale,
Whose Tongue well steep'd in Sack, began this Tale . . .
My Bullyrocks, I've been experienced long
In most of liquors that is counted strong . . .

But none do I find
Like Humming Northern Ale to please my mind. . . .

*G. M. Gent.*

2 This ale, it is a gallant thing,
It cheers the spirits of a king,
It makes a dumb man strive to sing,
Aye, and a beggar play!
A cripple that is lame and halt,
And scarce a mile a day can walk,
When he feels the juice of malt,
Will throw his crutch away.

CHORUS

Be frolicsome, every one,
Melancholy none;
Drink about!
See it out,
And then we'll all go home,
And then we'll all go home!

*Craven Churn Supper Song.*

3. The Strength of England, Beef in Craven Fed,
The spacious horns, with foam upon each head:
Ale such as slew grief, anguish, care and woe—
Such as they brewed three hundred years ago.

*Lyre of Ebor.*

4. . . . Thence to SEDBERGH, sometimes Joy-all,
Gamesome, gladsome, richly royal;
But those Jolly Boys are sunken,
Now scarce once a Year are drunken;
There I durst not well be merry,
Far from home old Foxes werry.

*Drunken Barnaby.*

5. What I once was, same I am now,
Hair, Conditions, Garments too;
Yea, there's no man justly doubteth
These the same shoes I went out with.

*Idem.*

6. O Faustulus! tak'st no Pity
For the Field to leave the City?
Nor thy Comforts, lively Skinkers,
Witty Wags and lusty Drinkers,
Lads of Life who wash their Livers
And are dry and thirsty ever. . . .

*Idem.*

7. The Oil of Malt, and Juice of spritely Nectar
Have made my Muse more valiant than Hector.

*Idem.*

8. Immortal fame, O cobblers, ye derive
From Crispin, a good cobbler when alive,
Who kept his stall at Hockley-in-the-Hole,
With nut-brown beer encouraging his soul.
A bonnet blue he wore upon his head,
His nose was copper, and his jerkin red.

*Francis Fawkes.*

# OF THE YORKSHIRE WITCHES

All these . . . were, at one time, of great note, and did in their days work great deed and cast many an evil spell and charm, and were held in great fear by many great and good and peaceful folk. It be not for me to put an argument in the favour of what now be doubted and scorned by some.

I will but say that I have seen and know that which hath been wrought by these Hags o' the Broom of their own power, which they held at their beck and wink, the which is not to be set on one side at the flip and flout of our young masters and misses fresh from some teaching drove into their brainpans by some idiotick and skeptick French teacher. I therefore say no more on this matter. . . .

*Calvert.*

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


Tacitus: De Potatoribus insuperabilibus [Gaii Cornelii Taciti]. Opus insigne.

Cæsar: The Barbarous Ale-Boyes.

Nullus: Owt Cæsar? ? Nowt Nullus!

Bacchus: The Nappy Yorkśhyre Ale.

Malorie (very rare): King Arthur at Richmond Awaiting the Last Trump. . . .

Hood Robin (vellum): My Lyfe in Yorkshyre.

Alfred Gt.: Havercakes, and how to Bake 'em.

Spenser (out of print): The Faery Shire.

Luther (slightly scorched): Die Unverderblichen Yorkshire-Männer.

Dom Moone Osb.: Ye onlie true Origin of Man in Yorkshyre. (Illuminated.)

Shak-Bacon: Gammon-Hams.

Guillaume: Les Derniers Ditchers.

Wharfe: (In preparation) The River of Paradise.

Ouse: (In preparation) The Salt of the Earth.

Aire: (In preparation) The Noblest Riding.

Swale: (In preparation) The Cream of the Shire.

Scribe: (In contemplation) The Last of the Hogs.

*Requested by his long-suffering publisher to compile an Index to his learned work,* Scribe *protested that his repugnance to numbers was so intense (see p. —) and their influence so evil that he could not comply. To quote his own words:*

". . . I am ready to compile a list of Places and Things to be avoided like the plague (e.g. London, Durham, Sussex, Darlington, Lancashire, Thingummy, Thingumtibob: Prosodists, Critics, Antiquarians, etc., etc.) or even an Index of notable passages (e.g. —: —: —: —: —: —: —: —: —: —: —: etc., etc., etc.). But for the rest, these —— pages so teem with references to Places and Marvels generally that an Index would occupy almost as much place as the text. Why, even the inns alone (I am amazed to find) would fill no less than —— pages! As for York, Richmond, Keld, Northallerton and Bacchus (to mention only ——), these must be alluded to at least —— times. And the Hogs themselves —— as many times!

"Who, then, would have been a whit the wiser had I put all these one after the other in strict alphabetical order, each followed by a long string of meaningless figures? And how could I possibly put 'Hobs' next door to 'Hogs' and hope to sell a single edition—let alone * * * teen?

"And what has York to do with figures anyway—or Yorkshire Pudding? (see especially pages ** to **).

"Moreover, imagine the impertinence of putting a number after Malham Cove! Enough to make Aire come out of his hole again!

. . . . . .

"True, it would have been much easier for a Hog to tear his way through the book if those glowing passages wherein he is singled out for special praise, had been indexed all to themselves. But the book was not written exclusively in praise of Hogs. Certain obscure pages were intended for those stout-thewed Fellows who plod on diligently from page ** to page ** and scorn short cuts (see particularly pages — to —).

"A murrain on the Index!

"With all its faults, this modest little book is not a Guide-Book. And Heaven forbid that I should make it easier for a Hog to find his way to any blessed place mentioned that he has not previously found.

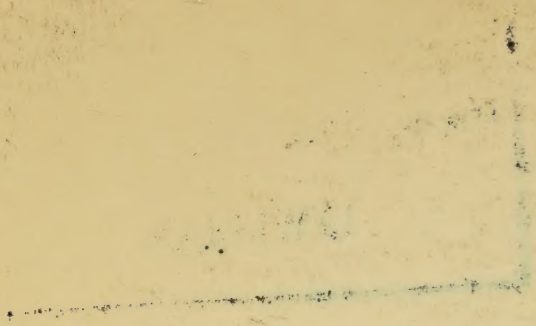
"In short, all who walk may read, and reading, mark for their future delectation. But to meet *them* half-way, I have clapped on the top of every page, a finger-post clue to its general direction.

"For the rest, so long as I escape the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, I am content.

"*Vale!*" . . .

Here's tiv us all on us! me an' all.
May we nivver want nowt, noan on us.
Nor me nawther!

MADE AT THE
TEMPLE PRESS
LETCHWORTH
GREAT BRITAIN



TRANSFERRED TO
Metropolitan Special Collections
LEWISHAM.